

THE NEW MIDDLE AGES



WOMEN  
*in the* MEDIEVAL  
ISLAMIC WORLD

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*edited by Gavin R. G. Hambly*

# Women in the Medieval Islamic World

THE NEW MIDDLE AGES  
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# THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

BONNIE WHEELER

*Series Editor*

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# Women in the Medieval Islamic World

Power, Patronage, and Piety

EDITED BY

GAVIN R.G. HAMBLY

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WOMEN IN THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC WORLD

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*For*

*Charles Brandon Hambly*

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## SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

*The New Middle Ages* presents transdisciplinary studies of medieval cultures. Both through scholarly monographs and essay collections, the series reflects the diverse ideologies and practices of these cultures. It aims especially to recuperate the histories of women in these cultures. *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, edited by Gavin R.G. Hambly, is the sixth volume in the series. It is also the first volume to be published under the aegis of the Scholarly and Reference Division of St. Martin's Press. We would like to thank St. Martin's, and particularly our editor, Michael Flamini, for enthusiastically endorsing our project. We also thank Narayan Bhat, Dean of the Graduate School of Southern Methodist University, for his aid and unflagging support.

This collection challenges traditional categories. It alters significantly our information about women's lives and our understanding of their roles in the pre-modern Islamic world. It opens the world of Muslim women so often treated by commentators as impenetrable and screened, as a monolithic 'Other.' By revealing these women in their contexts, in a wide range of their concerns and activities, Hambly and his collaborators help to 'lift the veil' about Muslim women and Islamic cultures. We learn about women as rulers and patrons, as warriors and wives, as creditors and debtors. The record made available in these essays will doubtless propel a rich new range of cross-pollinated studies. This collection also amplifies traditional Western categories of historical periodization by suggesting the long continuity of the Islamic world's medieval phase. In many respects, then, this study interrogates our inherited notions of 'medieval' as well as of 'women.'

Bonnie Wheeler  
Southern Methodist University

## PREFACE

This anthology of essays owes its genesis to the encouragement and enthusiasm of my friends of many years, Bonnie Wheeler and Jeremy Adams of Southern Methodist University, who first proposed that I draw up a "wish-list" for a book on women in the medieval Islamic world. We believe the result to be the first publication devoted to Muslim women in pre-modern times, providing a rich range of new information and ideas about their cultural history. I am grateful to all my collaborators for their patience and diligence.

For the most part, Europeans and Americans (and some Muslims) have cavalierly stereotyped women in the Islamic world as passive victims of male oppression, without rights, without individuality, and without voices. The essays which follow provide material for a rather different set of assumptions: women exercising substantive political influence, dispensing considerable material resources for the construction of public buildings, and supporting through direct patronage mystics, saints, and men of letters. These women were engaged in a surprisingly varied range of activities. As editor of this volume, I am bemused by the gallery of colorful figures, real and fictitious, who appear in these pages: the woman who competes in disguise with her betrothed in riding, archery, and wrestling, and proves his equal; the woman warrior who bares her breasts to a male adversary, thereby causing his eyes literally to pop out of his head; the daughter of the sultān of Delhi who seizes the throne and, unveiled, leads her troops into battle; and the noblewoman who has her slaves thrown into the Nile to discover how crocodiles devour their prey. Admittedly, most of these women belong to elite groups and further research in the field will surely see the emphasis shifting to the activities of subaltern women as members of the medieval work-force.

It remains only to express my deep appreciation of the help which I have received from Linda Snow, Research Librarian, and Vicki

Bullock, Interlibrary Loan Assistant, both on the library staff of the University of Texas at Dallas, and from Professor Wheeler and her most willing research student assistants, Xiaodi Zhang, Gabriela Boldea, and Pennington Ingle of Southern Methodist University. The keen eye, lucid mind, and intellectual devotion of Professor Wheeler's student Matthew Ervin merits special thanks. Without his expert assistance, this book would not yet have seen the light of day. Finally, I owe an inestimable debt to my wife, Donna Berliner, for her untiring support and enthusiasm, and for the many hours that she spent on the word-processor.

Gavin R.G. Hambly  
Dallas

## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

As every Islamicist knows, there is no perfect solution to the problem of transliteration from Middle Eastern languages. Here, the editor requested that the contributors observe the system used in the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Islam* [hereafter the two editions will be represented by either EI(1) or EI(2) throughout the text] with three modifications: that place-names should reflect current international usage (thus, Damascus, not Dimashq; Delhi, not Dihli; Granada, not Gharnāṭa), that J and not DJ should stand for the Arabic letter JIM; and that Q and not Q̣ should stand for the Arabic letter QĀF. Contributors have, however, pointed out to me that even the *The Encyclopedia of Islam* itself is not invariably consistent in this regard, which being the case, I trust that readers will overlook such inconsistencies as occur in the following pages, and put them down to editorial legerdemain.

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Women in the  
Medieval Islamic World





BECOMING VISIBLE:  
MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC WOMEN IN  
HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

*Gavin R.G. Hambly*

Most general overviews of Islamic history, and perhaps especially those to which students are first introduced, have little or nothing to say about the lives of women. As Ronald C. Jennings described the prevailing stereotype in 1975:

Women have generally been considered by modern western observers to occupy a despised and servile position in the social and economic order of Islamic civilization. Arabists and anthropologists have been in accord that Muslim women were virtually the property first of their fathers or older brothers and then of their husbands, that Muslim women were not able to manage or control any of their own property and, in fact, were usually denied the inheritance to which the Koran entitled them, and that they even had no say in their marriages, into which they were sold by their fathers or guardians. From its beginning to the present day Islam has supposedly heaped indignities and scorn upon women. They are held to have been utterly unable to challenge or even question the authority of their fathers, brothers, and husbands.<sup>1</sup>

Historians have made passing reference to the status of women in Islamic society, law, and beliefs, but they have usually contented themselves with emphasizing the practice of *hijāb*, or veiling, polygamy, concubinage, and the harem. Not that the student was left wholly unaware of a female presence: there was the nurturing figure of *Khadija* in the life of the Prophet of Islam and (from the *Shīʿite* point of view) the intrusive figure of 'Ā'ishā, the Prophet's favorite wife of his old age, as well as some of the wives and mothers of later caliphs. Busbecq, the Emperor Ferdinand's ambassador to Sulaymān the Magnificent (926–74/1520–66), long ago introduced

Western readers to the notorious Hurrem Sultān, better known to Europeans as Roxana. Travelers in seventeenth-century India wrote of the power and patronage of Nūr Jahān, Jahāngīr's wife, and of her niece, Mumtāz Maḥall, for whom the Tāj Maḥall was built; and then there were those larger-than-life fictional women who filled the pages of *The Thousand and One Nights* and of the Persian epics and romances, some knowledge of which gradually filtered into the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European literary tradition.

For all that, it can be safely stated that generations of scholars of the Islamic past, whether they emerged from an indigenous Muslim tradition or were part of the European Orientalist tradition, largely ignored the existence of women. This omission was all the more strange because medieval Muslim writers by no means avoided the subject, but the majority of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European scholars and travelers viewed Islamic religious culture and law as being repressive toward women. They understood that the women of a Muslim household were repositories of male honor and thus an improper subject for enquiries. Having no contacts with actual women other than servants, slaves, and, from a distance, peasants and nomads, they concluded that, apart from the atypical figures mentioned above, Muslim women had played no significant role in the shaping of Muslim history or culture. It was hardly surprising that European travelers of all periods, debarred from the sight of high-class women, who were secluded in their homes and veiled on the street, should have adopted sexual fantasies which combined the hidden and therefore exotic attractions of the denizens of the harem with an assumed licentiousness resulting from their master's neglect. This thread runs through much European travel-literature relating to the Middle East, and it occurs early, as early as a visit to Egypt in the late sixteenth century by an anonymous Englishman: "The women of this country are most beautiful, and goe in rich attire bedecked with gold, pretious stones, and jewels of great value, but chiefly perfumed with odours, and are very libidinous." Apparently, he proceeded to Mecca, of which he wrote: "the women of the place are courteous, jocund, and lovely, faire, with alluring eyes, being hote and libidinous, and the most of them naughtie packes."<sup>2</sup> Naturally, both civilizations mutually misunderstood each other. Thus, the twelfth-century Syrian notable, Usāma ibn Munqidh, could write of the Crusaders whom he knew well in Outremer: "The Franks are void of all zeal and jealousy. One of them may be walking along with his wife. He meets another man who takes the wife by the hand and steps aside to

converse with her while the husband is standing on one side waiting for his wife to conclude the conversation. If she lingers too long for him, he leaves her alone with the conversant and goes away." Such mores must have seemed as outlandish to the Syrian as the seclusion of Muslim women must have seemed to his Frankish acquaintances.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this general picture of neglect, it is by no means true to say that all students of Islamic history and civilization ignored the presence of women, and in that select company are to be found some of the most distinguished of European Islamicists, such as Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) and Henri Lammens (1862–1937).<sup>4</sup> Much of the commentary, however, reflected a widespread, nineteenth-century, Christian prejudice towards Islam as a faith and as a social system, provoking a famous apologia by the Indian jurist, Amīr 'Alī, in his *Spirit of Islam*, in which he devoted an entire chapter to the status of women, while expostulating against European bias. He wrote:

Even under the laws as they stand at present in the pages of the legists, the legal position of Moslem females may be said to compare favorably with that of European women. . . . As long as she is unmarried she remains under the parental roof, and until she attains her majority she is, to some extent, under the control of the father or his representative. As soon, however, as she is of age, the law vests in her all the rights which belong to her as an independent human being. She is entitled to share in the inheritance of her parents along with her brothers, and though the proportion is different, the distinction is founded on the relative position of brother and sister. A woman who is *sui juris* can under no circumstances be married without her own express consent, 'not even by the sultan.' On her marriage she does not lose her individuality. She does not cease to be a separate member of society.

An ante-nuptial settlement by the husband in favor of the wife is a necessary condition, and on his failure to make a settlement the law presumes one in accordance with the social position of the wife. A Moslem marriage is a civil act, needing no priest, requiring no ceremonial. The contract of marriage gives the man no power over the woman's person, beyond what the law defines, and none whatever upon her goods and property. Her rights as a mother do not depend for their recognition upon the idiosyncrasies of individual judges. Her earnings acquired by her own exertions cannot be wasted by a prodigal husband, nor can she be ill-treated with impunity by one who is brutal. She acts, if *sui juris*, in all matters which relate to herself and her property in her own individual right, without the intervention of husband or father. She can sue her debtors in the open courts, without the necessity of joining a next friend, or under cover of her husband's name. She continues to exercise, after she has passed from her father's house into her husband's home, all the rights which the law gives to men. All the privileges which belong to her as a woman and a wife are

secured to her, not by the courtesies which 'come and go,' but by the actual text in the book of law. Taken as a whole, her status is not more unfavorable than that of many European women, while in many respects she occupies a decidedly better position. Her comparatively backward condition is the result of a want of culture among the community generally, rather than of any special feature in the laws of the fathers.<sup>5</sup>

Such polemical writing hardly constituted women's history in the current sense of the term. The first pioneer of women's history in the Middle East seems to have been the remarkable Arab-American scholar, Nabia Abbott (1897-1981). Abbott was born in Mardin in southeastern Turkey, where her father was a Christian Arab merchant, whose business activities took him and his family first to Mosul, then to Baghdad, and finally to British Bombay. In India, Nabia Abbott was educated in various English-language schools, graduating in 1919 with an A.B. degree with honors from Isabella Thorbom School for Girls in Lucknow. Thereafter, she returned briefly to Mesopotamia (now a League of Nations Mandate) where she was employed in the task of furthering women's education under the aegis of Gertrude Bell in what had become the newly created kingdom of Iraq. She then moved with her family to the United States, receiving an A.M. from Boston University in 1925. In that year, she joined the faculty of Ashbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky, where she taught history until 1933, becoming in the course of time head of the department. She was then invited to join the staff of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the first woman to do so, where she worked with Martin Sprengling on the early Islamic documents that were in the institute's possession. She remained there for the next thirty years until her retirement in 1963. She died in 1981.

Abbott wrote on many topics (epigraphy, numismatics, papyrology), but she was also among the first scholars to attempt to write on the history of Muslim women. Her interest in this topic first emerged definitively in 1941 with two articles, "Pre-Islamic Arab Queens"<sup>6</sup> and "Women and the State on the Eve of Islam."<sup>7</sup> In the following year, she completed her triptych on women at the beginning of the Islamic era with "Women and the State in Early Islam"<sup>8</sup> together with a biography, *Aishah, the Beloved of Mohammad*.<sup>9</sup> In 1946, she published *Two Queens of Baghdad, Mother and Wife of Harun al-Rashid*.<sup>10</sup> She had no immediate imitators.

Down to the present proliferation in the writing of women's history,<sup>11</sup> there has been, to my knowledge, only one scholarly attempt to bring medieval Muslim women to the front of the stage. This was Ann K.S. Lambton's magisterial *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia* of 1988, in which she devoted a chapter, "The Women of the Ruling House," to the political and economic roles of the women of the Saljūkid and Ilkhānid dynasties.<sup>12</sup> Nothing of this kind had been attempted before, and it remains a classic statement.

Meanwhile, over a century ago, the great Islamicist Ignaz Goldziher asked himself what part women had played in the world of traditional Islamic folk-religion, where the cults of holy persons, their tombs, and shrines addressed some of the most deeply felt needs of the community. In an article, "Le culte des saints chez les Musulmans," he challenged Perron's assertion that women were essentially excluded from the spiritual life of Islam.<sup>13</sup> Goldziher correctly recognized that women played a major part in the maintenance of folk-cults and pilgrimages to local shrines, besides sometimes being in themselves objects of intense veneration. The cult of holy women was, for him, clearly indicated in the Cairene shrines of al-Ṣayyida Nafisa and al-Ṣayyida Zaynab.<sup>14</sup>

Goldziher's insights may have inspired Margaret Smith's full-length study of the life and teachings of the early woman mystic, Rābī'a of Basra (95–185/713–801), which first drew attention to the role of women *ṣūfīs*.<sup>15</sup> In so doing, Smith posed questions which have yet to be answered regarding the place of women in Islamic spirituality, and especially in Sufism. As Annemarie Schimmel has expressed it,

The attitude of Sufism toward the fair sex was ambivalent, and it can even be said that Sufism was more favorable to the development of feminine activities than other branches of Islam. The sympathy of the Prophet for women, his numerous marriages and his four daughters, excluded that feeling of dejection so often found in medieval Christian monasticism. The veneration of Fatima in Shia circles is indicative of the important role that could be assigned to the feminine element in Islamic religious life.<sup>16</sup>

Schimmel herself has written of the "Feminine Element in Sufism."<sup>17</sup> For J. Spencer Trimingham, "Mysticism was the only religious sphere where women could find a place,"<sup>18</sup> whether as individual devotees

or as members of religious communities. In early Islamic times, he argues, the term *ribāṭ* (notwithstanding other, later meanings) was applied to a convent for *ṣūfī* women, while *khānaqāh* denoted a male community. In Aleppo, for example, between 1150 and 1250, there were seven convents for women. Baghdad too had several, of which the best known was the *ribāṭ* of Fāṭima Raḍiyya, who had died in 521/1127. Those in Cairo included the famous *Ribāṭ-i Baghdādiyya*, built in 684/1285 by a daughter of Sultan Baybars I (658–76/1260–77) in honor of a female *ṣūfī*, *Shaykha* Zaynab bint Abīl Barakāt, otherwise known as Bint al-Baghdādiyya.<sup>19</sup> But it is no exaggeration to say that the study of women in relation to Sufism is still in its infancy, whether in terms of the lives and teachings of individual women mystics, of women's roles in the lives of *ṣūfī shaykhs* (and here the *ṣūfī* literature of medieval India offers a promising field), or of those *silsilas* which, like the Bektāshīs, encourage female participation or, like the Mawlawiyyas, preserve biographical or genealogical traces of women connected with the early history of the order.<sup>20</sup> In his recent translation of the *Tadhkirat-i Uwaysiyya*, for example, Julian Baldick has drawn attention to the prominence of female devotees in that tradition.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from women as *ṣūfīs*, the study of women as scholars, teachers, and transmitters of knowledge has also been neglected. Again, Goldziher remains a founding figure, stressing the role of women in the *isnāds* as authorities for *hadīths*. He mentions specifically the women of Kufa as transmitters of *hadīths* going back to the Prophet's Companion, Salāma al-Fazāriyya; lists 'Ābida al-Madaniyya and her grand-daughter, 'Abda bint Bishr, as notable transmitters; stresses Karīma bint Aḥmad of Marv as a source for al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*; and emphasizes the importance of the Andalusī, *Shuhda*. Further, some women in early Islam acted as teachers and judges.<sup>22</sup> All this raises questions about female education, in the harem and elsewhere, the extent of female literacy, and the way in which a few women became not only literate but well-read. Who taught them? Was education encouraged or frowned upon? There are no immediate answers to these questions. Michael Chamberlain, in his exhaustive study of the intellectual life of medieval Damascus, takes it for granted that, among the ruling elite, the presence of literate and well-educated women was the norm. His study was not specifically concerned with women, but he assumes a female

presence. Thus, writing with regard to the foundation of *madrasas* within Damascus during the two centuries following Nūr al-Dīn's arrival there in 549/1154, he states:

The role women played in foundations reveals the extent to which it was the household, and not amirs or rulers themselves, who founded waqfs on a large scale....Between 554/1159–60 and 620/1223–24, according to Nu'aymī, five of the major foundations were established by women from military households, all but one from the ruler's household, and from 620 to 658/1259–60 another five foundations were founded by women from within ruling households or the households of important amirs. The reasons given for these foundations are varied, but all show that these women acted as powerful members of warrior households.<sup>23</sup>

Discussing the transmission of learning, Chamberlain writes of study-circles, "including those in which women delivered lectures to other women" in private houses.<sup>24</sup> Women teachers were applauded for the social benefits they conferred upon the women whom they taught: "The worst of people is a learned man who does not benefit others by his learning," itself a *ḥadīth*.<sup>25</sup>

There existed, however, a pervasive current in Islamic thought which argued in favor of the total exclusion of women from public life, harking back to the *ḥadīth*, "those who entrust power to a woman will never enjoy prosperity." According to al-Bukhārī, this *ḥadīth* was quoted by one of the Prophet's former companions following 'Alī's victory over the supporters of 'Ā'isha at the so-called Battle of the Camel in 35/656. This *ḥadīth* was what would-be reformers in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire had in mind when they deplored the interference of palace women in imperial affairs from the time of Murād III (982–1003/1574–95) down to the early years of the reign of Murād IV (1032–49/1623–40), which the twentieth-century Turkish historian, Ahmed Refik, canonized when he coined the derisive phrase *Kadımlar Saltanatı* [the sultanate of women]. Virtually all historians of the Ottoman Empire since the seventeenth century, whether indigenous or Western, have concurred in the conviction that the influence of the harem was a factor contributing to Ottoman 'decline' (the same has been said of other Islamic dynasties, including the Safavids and the Mughals), and it is only recently that Leslie Peirce's monograph *The Imperial Harem* challenged an *obiter dictum* which had hitherto seemed set in stone.



In reality, well-placed women in traditional Islamic societies always had the opportunity to influence public affairs, even if that influence was used inconspicuously. There was always the possibility of a strong female personality determining the actions of a less forceful husband, son, or brother, or of a ruler becoming infatuated with one of the women in his harem. Many such instances are recorded, of which the epitome was perhaps the case of the black lutanist Ittifāq, to whom Robin Irwin refers as "the Lola Montez of her age."<sup>26</sup> She was to be the wife of three sultans in succession. A musician in the harem of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, presumably during his third reign (709–41/1309–40), she afterwards was the wife of al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'il (743–46/1342–45), al-Kāmil Sha'bān (746–47/1345–46), and al-Muẓaffar Ḥājījī (747–48/1346–47). In 748/1347, a faction among the Mamlūk *amīrs* led a *coup d'état*, including among its demands the sultan's dismissal of Ittifāq and another woman. These two were expelled from the citadel "with nothing but the clothes they stood up in. Ittifāq lost the jeweled head-dress which three sultans had competed to adorn, and which was worth over 100,000 dinars."<sup>27</sup> However, she proved a survivor, marrying thereafter a Mamlūk *vazīr* and then a scion of the Marinid dynasty of Morocco.

More typical was the figure of the forceful queen-mother (in the Ottoman Empire, the *Valide sultan*) who sought to advance the interests of her son against possible rivals and, in so doing, found herself forced to intervene in affairs of state. There are numerous examples of this phenomenon, of which a prime instance would be the case of the Basque woman, Şubḥ, a wife of the Spanish Umayyad, al-Ḥakam II (350–66/961–76), and the mother of Hiṣḥām II (366–99/976–1009 and 400–403/1010–13), who was forced to pit her wits against the formidable *ḥājib* al-Manṣūr. Another such type was the favorite concubine [or *haseki*], whose ambition was the advancement (or survival) of her son in the face of older half-brothers, of whom Hurrem Sulṭān, who ensured the succession of her son, Selīm II (974–82/1566–74), through the elimination of his half-brothers, was the epitome. But women also made their influence felt by providing valuable counsel to a brother, son, or husband. Sitt al-Mulk, sister to the sixth Fāṭimid caliph-imām, al-Ḥākim (386–411/996–1021), seems to have acted as one of his advisers, although later she may have commissioned his murder and she certainly stage-managed the succession of al-Zāhir. Terken Khātūn, a Qipčaq Turk who

became the favorite of 'Alā' al-Dīn Tekish (567–96/1172–1200), so dominated the court of their son, 'Alā' al-Dīn Muḥammad (596–617/1200–20) and quarreled so bitterly with his heir by another wife, Jalāl al-Dīn, that she may have contributed to the impotence of the Khwārazmshāhī kingdom in the face of the Mongol onslaught.

Another woman to become politically engaged was Baghdād Khātūn during the reign of the Ilkhān Abū Sa'īd (717–36/1304–35). Her mother was Abū Sa'īd's sister, and her father the powerful *amīr al-ulus* Čübān. Her first husband was Shaykh Hasan Buzurg, founder of the Jalāyirid dynasty (736–835/1336–1432), whom she married in 723/1323. Her uncle, the Ilkhān, desired her, but for a time was foiled by her father, but after Čübān's murder in 728/1327, she became the Ilkhān's wife. She now enjoyed a period of unprecedented power as the harem favorite, even acquiring the *laqab* [or honorific title] of *Khudāwandigār* [sovereign]. In 732/1331–32, she briefly fell from grace because of accusations that she had plotted the assassination of Abū Sa'īd with her former husband, but in the following year she was restored to favor. A blow to her authority came in 734/1333–34, when Abū Sa'īd married her niece, Dilshād Khātūn, and elevated the latter to the rank of principal wife. Baghdād Khātūn displayed her resentment at her diminished status and when, according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Abū Sa'īd died in 736/1335, she was accused of poisoning him and was beaten to death in her bathhouse either by order of his *amīrs* or his successor, Arpa. For a while, however, she had been Abū Sa'īd's closest confidante.<sup>28</sup>

The authority exercised by elite women in the Mongol Khānates of the Middle East was real enough.<sup>29</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, visiting the Dašt-i Qipčaq in the 1330s, was astonished to see the authority which was asserted publicly by the wives of Özbek, Khān of the Golden Horde, during the khān's absence.<sup>30</sup> This tradition of women exercising real power ran as a clear thread through the Turko-Mongol dynasties of Central Asian origin, such as the Saljūkids and their Atabeg *epigones*, the Ilkhānids, the Khāns of the Golden Horde, the Čaġhatāyids, and the Tīmūrids. Several women of the Tīmūrid dynasty wielded substantial power in collaboration with or on behalf of husbands, such as Gawhar Shād, the consort of Shāh Rukh (807–50/1405–47), and Nūr Jahān, the vigorous helpmate of Jahāngīr (1014–37/1605–27). Kathryn Babayan argues in chapter sixteen that this tradition remained alive and well under the Šafavids, and a recent biographer

of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh Qājār (1264–1313/1848–96) extends the idea further in time when, in reference to the Shāh's mother, he writes of "the undercurrent of matriarchy in the Qajar elite."<sup>31</sup> However, it must be admitted that many of these politically active and conspicuous women died violent deaths following a change in the climate of court politics or the death of a husband or son, which is exemplified by the fate of the wife of Muḥammad Khudābanda (985–96/1578–88) and the mother of the future 'Abbās I (996–1038/1588–1629), the Mazandarani princess, Khayr al-Nisā' Begam, known as Mahd-i 'Ulyā, whose appropriation of power so inflamed the Qizilbāsh amīrs that they arranged to have her strangled in the harem (1 Jumādā I 987/26 July 1579) on the alleged grounds of a liaison with a brother of the Khān of the Crimea.<sup>32</sup>

The case of women actually attempting to exercise direct sovereignty is quite different and much rarer, reflecting the long-standing opposition to an explicit public role for women as opposed to implicit influence from behind the curtain. Mrs. Proudīe might hold sway over her bishop in the palace, but she could not carry out his duties. Among the most conspicuous and long-lasting examples of female rule in Islamic history is that of Ṣayyida Ḥurra of the Ṣulayḥid dynasts of Yemen (439–532/1047–1138), adherents of the Ismā'īlī dā'wa and protégés of the Fāṭimid caliph-imāms, the subject here of chapter five by Farhad Daftary. No less colorful was the career of the woman who proclaimed herself sultan of Delhi, Raḍiyya bint Iltutmish (634–37/1236–40), whose adventurous reign is described by Peter Jackson in chapter nine. Shajar ad-Durr, the Turkish widow of the Ayyūbid ruler of Egypt, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (637–47/1240–49), seized power during the confused period which ushered in Mamlūk rule and during 648/1250 reigned in her own name as *malikat al-muslimīn* [Queen of the Muslims]. She was gradually eased out of power by the Baḥrīyya Mamlūk *amīrs* and, on 11 Rabi' II 655/28 April 1257, she was murdered and her body exposed outside the Cairo Citadel.<sup>33</sup>

More successful than Shajar ad-Durr was Tandū Khātūn bint Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn, the daughter of the third ruler of the Mongol Jalāyirid dynasty (736–835/1336–1432). Originally married to the Circassian Mamlūk Sulṭān, al-Zāhir Barqūq (784–91 and 790–99/1382–89 and 1390–91), she returned to Baghdad after Barqūq's death and married the Jalāyirid ruler (her cousin), Sulṭān Valad (813–14/

1410–11), whose murder she then instigated. Thereafter, she ruled in Baghdad, where her name was read in the *khutba* and impressed on the coinage, although she may have ruled through Maḥmud (814–18/1411–15), a son of her late husband by another wife. Ejected from Baghdad by the Qara Qyunlu chieftain, Qara Yūsuf, she managed to gain possession of southern Iraq (Wasit and Basra) together with Shushtar, for which she paid homage to the Tīmūrid, *Shāh Rukh*. She may have had as co-ruler another of her husband's sons, Uways II, whom she is also said to have had killed, ruling alone until her death, which is variously given as 819/1416 or 822/1419.

Another woman who briefly assumed sovereignty was the Ilkhānid princess, Sātī Beg, daughter of Öljejtü and sister of Abū Sa'īd, who had been married to the powerful Mongol *amīr*, Čübān, in 719/1319. In 728/1327, Čübān was executed by order of the Ilkhān, and thereafter Sātī Beg remained a widow until her brother's death in 736/1335. The throne of the Ilkhānate now passed briefly to Arpa (736/1335–36), a descendant of Hülegü's brother Ariq Böge, whom Sātī Beg married, and then to Mūsā, a grandson of the Ilkhān Baydu. Mūsā was in turn challenged by Muḥammad, a great-grandson of Hülegü's son Tash-Möngke, and by Toḡha-Temür, a descendant of Čingiz Khān's brother. In the ensuing chaos, Čübān's grandson, *Shaykh* Ḥasan Küchük, emerged as king-maker and proclaimed Sātī Beg as Ilkhān (739/1338–39). Perhaps finding her too independently minded, he arranged for her to marry Sulaymān, a great-great grandson of Hülegü. There is no reason to doubt, however, that she reigned as sole ruler down to c. 741/1340–41. On her coins, she used the customary Ilkhānid formula, *al-sulṭān al-'adl Sātī Beg khān*.<sup>34</sup>

How women wielded power in a society deeply suspicious of their intrusion into public affairs is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the case of the women of the Salghurid Atabegs of Fars (543–668/1148–1270) and the Qutluḡ-Khānids of Kirman (619–703/1222–1303). Here, the evidence is rather plentiful. Mongol overlordship mitigated traditional prejudices against women rulers, including the prejudice against women leading troops into battle.

In the case of the Salghurids, the story begins with Terken Khātūn, the wife of Sa'd II b. Abī Bakr b. Sa'd b. Zangī, who at her husband's death in 659/1261 emerged as the ruler of Fars and was duly confirmed as such by the Ilkhān Hülegü. She then married a kinsman,

presumably as part of some now forgotten dynastic pact, but he killed her in a drunken frenzy and subsequently rebelled against the *Īlkhān*. After his defeat and death in 662/1263–64, Hülegü nominated Terken *Khātūn*'s infant daughter, *Ābish Khātūn*, to be the ruler of Fars, and her name was read in the *khutba* and struck on the coinage. In 672/1273–74, when she was about fifteen, she was taken to the *Īlkhān*'s *ordu* (the *Īlkhān* was now Hülegü's eldest son, Abaqa, 663–80/1265–82) and married to Tash-Möngke (Mengü-Temür), a younger son of Hülegü, to whom she had long been betrothed. This was a marriage, forbidden in Islamic law, between a Muslim woman and a shamanist, but presumably the will of the *Īlkhān* transcended all other considerations. She became his chief wife and had two daughters by him, *Kürdüjin* and *Alghanchī*(?). When her husband was sent as governor to Fars, she was retained in the *ordu*, but in 682/1283–84, the new *Īlkhān*, *Aḥmad Tegüder* (680–83/1282–84), recalled him from Shiraz and appointed *Ābish Khātūn* in his place. Her financial recklessness, coinciding with a drought throughout Fars, meant that she defaulted on her revenue payments, so that *Aḥmad Tegüder*'s successor, *Arghūn* (683–90/1284–91), ordered her to appear at the *ordu*. Perhaps relying on the good offices of *Öljei Khātūn*, Hülegü's widow, to protect her from the *Īlkhān*'s wrath, she declined to go and behaved outrageously toward the officials sent to supersede her. She was eventually forced to capitulate and submitted to the *Īlkhān* (*Öljei Khātūn* did indeed intercede for her), dying at the *ordu* in 685/1286–87. Interestingly, despite the disfavor of her latter days, her will remained in force and effect, her estates in Fars and the sum of 100,000 *dīnārs* granted to her by Hülegü at the time of her marriage to his son being divided into four equal parts: one part to each of her daughters, one to a son of her husband by another wife, and one to her slaves and those whom she had manumitted. Her eldest daughter, *Kürdüjin*, made three significant marriages before the *Īlkhān* *Abū Sa'īd* (717–36/1317–35) granted her the tax-farm of the province of Fars, where she ended her days as a munificent ruler and patron.

*Kürdüjin*'s first marriage, to the sixth *Qutluḡ-Khānid* ruler of Kirman, *Soyurghatmish*, moves the scene eastwards from Shiraz to Kirman. Here, again, a local dynasty established a pattern of strong female rulers. The *Qutluḡ-Khānids*, in the person of the founder of the family's fortunes, *Baraq Hājib*, had risen in the service of the

Khwārazmshāhs, but had, like the Salghurids of Fars, survived the Mongol onslaught and found a niche for themselves in the new dispensation. Baraq Hājib had four daughters, two of whom married into the family of the Atabegs of Yazd, one of whom married Čingiz Khān's son Čaghatāy and the fourth, Khān Terken, married Baraq Hājib's nephew Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad, who, following Baraq Hājib's death in 632/1235, became his successor. Meanwhile, Baraq Hājib's son Rukn al-Dīn Khwāja Juq had been retained as a hostage at the Mongol *ordu*, but he now obtained from the Great Khān Ögedey a *yarliġh* appointing him ruler of Kirman, and on arriving in the province, promptly ousted Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad. This was in 633/1236. He was to rule Kirman for the next fifteen years. He had three daughters: one married into the family of the Atabegs of Yazd, one into the family of the Atabegs of Luristan, and the third, Bībī Shāh, was sent to Hülegü's *ordu* after his father's death by Terken Khātūn (later to be known as Qutluġh Terken), another wife of the former ruler, Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad. There she became the concubine of Hülegü's son Tash Mōngke, dying in Tabriz in 715/1315-16.

Thus, the first Qutluġh-Khānids established a pattern of matrimonial alliances with the imperial Mongol house as well as with their neighbors in Yazd, Fars, and Luristan. Undoubtedly, Terken Khātūn, or Qutluġh Terken as she came to be known, was the most remarkable woman of the Qutluġh-Khānid dynasty and her career illustrates the opportunities which a resourceful and politically active woman could turn to her advantage. A Turk of unknown tribal origin, she was acquired by a slave-merchant of Isfahan, Hājji Šaliġh, who brought her up as his own child. She was reputedly a dazzling beauty, and the *qādī* of Isfahan sought her as a wife. When his suit was rejected by Hājji Šaliġh, he seized the girl by force. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Pīr-Shāh, the son of the Khwārazmshāh, was then in Isfahan, and Hājji Šaliġh appealed to him to rescue his daughter. But the cure proved as bad as the complaint, for Ghiyāth al-Dīn became infatuated with the beautiful slave-girl and kept her for himself. In 625/1288, Baraq Hājib of Kirman managed to kill Ghiyāth al-Dīn and sent his head to the Great Khān Ögedey. Meanwhile, Qutluġh Terken had fallen into the hands of the Atabeg of Yazd, 'Alā' al-Dawla Maḥmud Shāh. Baraq Hājib was outraged at this, claiming, in accordance with Mongol custom, that he had

slain the Great Khān's enemy and was therefore entitled to the latter's wives, children, and property. Eventually, an accommodation was worked out whereby Qutlugh Terken was handed over to Baraq Hājib, who gave Maḥmud Shāh of Yazd one of his own daughters in compensation. By Baraq Hājib, Qutlugh Terken had a daughter, Maryam Khātūn.

Shortly after Baraq Hājib's death, his nephew and successor Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad married Qutlugh Terken. Driven off the throne by his cousin Rukn al-Dīn, Quṭb al-Dīn and his dependents made their way to the Mongol *ordu*, but since Rukn al-Dīn enjoyed the favor of both the Great Khān Ögedey and his brother Čaghatāy, who was married to Rukn al-Dīn's sister, Quṭb al-Dīn spent the next fifteen years in exile in Central Asia. During that period, he began negotiations for the hand of Begi Khātūn, the daughter of a powerful Mongol *amīr*, Arghūn, but the marriage never took place. Meanwhile, Quṭb al-Dīn's affairs were so well supervised by Qutlugh Terken that she became the envy of all the Mongol *amīrs*.

Both her own and her husband's affairs changed completely with the accession of the Great Khān Möngke (649–58/1251–60), who was not disposed to favor his predecessors' protégés. Following arbitration over the respective claims of Rukh al-Dīn and Quṭb al-Dīn, probably during the first year of Möngke's administration, Rukn al-Dīn was handed over to Quṭb al-Dīn, who had him killed. Quṭb al-Dīn now returned to Kirman, where he died in 655/1257, leaving two young children, Hājāj Sulṭān, the son of Qutlugh Terken, and Soyurghatmiṣh, a son by another wife. Obviously, they were too young to rule. The Ilkhān Hülegü therefore appointed Qutlugh Terken to rule Kirman on behalf of her son, Hājāj, while military affairs were to be placed in the hands of the husband of her eldest daughter by Quṭb al-Dīn, Bibi Terken. Neither Qutlugh Terken nor the notables of Kirman were happy with this arrangement so she and they proceeded to the Ilkhān's *ordu* to obtain a *yarligh* granting her full authority, which she apparently obtained around 657/1259. She also obtained Hülegü's permission for the *amīr* Arghūn's daughter, Begi Khātūn, who was to have married her husband, to marry her son Hājāj Sulṭān instead, thus binding her family closer to the Mongol ruling elite. The bride eventually reached Kirman in 662/1263.

Qutluḡ Terken's second daughter, Pādshāh Khātun, became in 670/1271–72 the principal wife of the Ilkhān Abaqa, and in that position she was well-placed to look after her mother's and Kirman's interests. Qutluḡ Terken made it a practice to visit the *ordu* every two or three years. During the last years of Abaqa's reign, however, there seems to have been a cooling in relations between Kirman and the *ordu*. Qutluḡ Terken and Ḥajjāj quarreled and he fled into India, thereby whetting the ambitions of her stepson, Soyurghatmish, who had married Kūrdūjin, the daughter of the Salghurid, Ābish Khātūn. He even inserted his name in the *khutba* beside hers, which so infuriated her that she procured from the Ilkhān through the good offices of Pādshāh Khātūn a *yarliḡ* which confirmed her as sole ruler and forbade Soyurghatmish interfering in affairs of state. But her problems were only just beginning. Abaqa died in 680/1282, and his successor, Aḥmad Tegüder, and the new Ilkhān's mother, were both favorably disposed towards Soyurghatmish. Qutluḡ Terken set out for Tabriz to have her position confirmed, but on the way met Soyurghatmish, returning from Aḥmad Tegüder with a *yarliḡ* granting him the province of Kirman. However, she proceeded to Tabriz, where an influential clique, including the *vazīr*, Shams al-Dīn Juvaynī, favored her cause. Aḥmad Tegüder agreed to a division of Kirman between Qutluḡ Terken and Soyurghatmish, but before the settlement could be finalized, she died in Arran in 681/1282–83. She must have then been in her late seventies and had ruled for about twenty years, leaving an outstanding reputation, according to the chronicles, for justice and piety.

Qutluḡ Terken's eldest daughter, Bibī Terken, now became a major player in events both in the *ordu* and in Kirman until her death in 687 or 688 (1288 or 1289), after which Pādshāh Khātūn, now remarried to the Ilkhān Gaykhatu (690–94/1291–95) involved herself in the intrigues of the last Qutluḡ-Khānid contenders, eventually being strangled in 694/1295 by order of the Ilkhān Baydu (694/1295) for her murder of her half-brother, Soyurghatmish. The latter's widow, Kūrdūjin, now briefly came into her own as ruler of Kirman, but the new Ilkhān Ghāzān (694–703/1295–1304) replaced her with a son of Ḥajjāj, and she either lived at the *ordu* or in Fars until Abū Sa'īd granted her the revenues of Fars in 719/1319–20. Qutb al-Dīn Shāh Jahān, the son of Soyurghatmish, proved to be



the last Qutluḡ-Khānid ruler of Kirman (701–703/1301–1303). His daughter married the founder of the Muẓaffarid dynasty of Shiraz.<sup>35</sup>

There are several significant aspects of the preceding story: the complex relations between the Ilkhāns and their surrogates, and the regional interests which linked the dynasties of Kirman, Yazd, Fars, and Luristan; most significant of all, however, is the unspoken assumption that sovereignty could be exercised by a woman as well as by a man, without any of the constraints which seem to have inhibited Muslim women at other times and places from participating in active politics. There are, of course, a number of other interesting issues: what of the formal education of these women? In what languages did they conduct public business? Were they seen as embodiments of an indigenous Irano-Islamic political order, or as agents of an alien Mongol *ecumene*? Certainly, those who ruled in Fars and Kirman engaged in the establishment or maintenance of typically prestigious religious foundations.

One area of women's activity which has recently attracted attention is the promotion and funding of building construction of all kinds, as well as the commemoration of individual women with mausolea. Both contradict the notion of the invisibility of women with indubitable evidence that women were lavish patrons of architecture, and therefore agents in the spatial organization of urban centers, along with the implication that some women were sufficiently esteemed to warrant commemoration after their deaths. Long-celebrated examples of both have been the tomb erected for her father, Mīrzā Ghīyāth al-Dīn Beg I'timāt al-Dawla, by Nūr Jahān, and Shāh Jahān's mausoleum for her niece, Mumtāz Maḥall, both at Agra,<sup>36</sup> but there are innumerable instances of structures built by or in honor of women which are only now becoming recognized as evidence of female participation in the life of the community. In this volume, Priscilla Soucek discusses patronage by the women of Tīmūr's household, while the role of women in the public architecture of Shahjahanabad (Delhi) and Isfahan is examined by Stephen Blake. Kozłowski takes up the discussion, suggesting that this was a function deliberately delegated to women. Certainly, we now recognize female patronage of this kind to be found almost everywhere. For example, describing surviving inscriptions from early Islamic Iran, Sheila Blair writes:

Women do not pass unnoticed. The noble lady [*al-sitta al-karīma*] Chihrzadh built the tomb tower at Lajim for her son the Bawandid prince, and the exalted lady [*al-sayyida al-jalīla*] Naz was buried in the Gunbad-i 'Alī at Abarquh beside her husband, the Firuzanid amir. The tradition of female patronage was well known under these small Daylamite dynasties, and later inscriptions show that it continued under the Saljuqs. Mu'mina Khatun, widow of the Saljuq sultan Tughril b. Muhammad, had a tomb tower built in Nakhchivan for her son Muhammad Jahan Pahlavan (d. 582/1186).<sup>37</sup>

Other random examples come to mind, such as the founding of a *madrasa* in Shiraz by Zāhida Khātūn, the widow of the *amīr* Boz-Aba, who ruled in Fars until 541/1146–47, when, at his death, she assumed his place and ruled for the next twenty-one years;<sup>38</sup> the construction of the Döner Kumbet in Kayseri by Shāh Jahān Khātūn, daughter of 'Alā' al-Dīn Kay-Qubādh I (616–34/1218–37); the tomb in Kirkuk of a daughter of Baghdād Khātūn;<sup>39</sup> or, mutely, and perhaps more commonly, an inscription recording the building of a mosque by an anonymous begam from Naginabagh in the Murshidabad District of Bengal (1136/1723–24).<sup>40</sup> It has recently been shown how much the Shāh-i Zinda complex in Samarkand owes to female patronage.<sup>41</sup> Women patrons of the Rasūlid dynasty of Yemen,<sup>42</sup> of the Mamlūks in Egypt,<sup>43</sup> of the Şafavids in Iran,<sup>44</sup> and of the Ottomans<sup>45</sup> have all recently received scholarly attention.

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It follows, then, that this book will modify the stereotypical assumption that in traditional Islamic society women were somehow "invisible." The first two chapters, by Jenny Rose and Richard N. Frye respectively, discuss what is known about the position of women in the pre-Islamic Sasanid Empire and Sogdiana. Aspects of the ways in which Islam affected the image of women are at the heart of David Pinault's discussion of the women of the households of the first Imāms in Shī'ite devotional literature, and of Marina Tolmacheva's examination of the role of women in the *hajj*.

Because the *sharī'a*, Islamic religious law, is central to the formulation of the Islamic ethos, the juridical status of women in both *sharī'a* and *'urf* [customary law] is now attracting considerable scholarly interest. The stereotype of Muslim women as hapless victims of juridical oppression was challenged a quarter of a century

ago by Ronald C. Jennings in his study of the operation of the *shari'a* courts of Ottoman Kayseri, and his findings remain valid:

Women occasionally appeared as debtors and creditors, the latter a little more often than the former. Some women got their money through inheritance, others as a dowry, and some actually seem to have participated in trade, perhaps on the model of the Prophet's wife Khadija; but unfortunately the source of the capital of most of the Kayseri women involved in credit is not revealed. The sicils [judicial records of the *kadi's* court], of course, do not reveal how men felt about debtor-creditor or other commercial relationships with women; they merely show that such relationships occasionally developed. The position of the court, as reflected in the case summaries in the sicils, was neutral.

A number of instances of women giving and receiving loans and credit occurred; perhaps a larger body of cases involved women who inherited a debt or credit from a relative and undertook to secure collection through the court. When contested disputes arose concerning problems of credit, those involving women were considered at court by exactly the same procedure as similar cases involving men. Women could make formal claims against any man, including their fathers, grown sons, and husbands. Although sometimes they named vekils to handle their cases, most often they managed their own affairs at court.

Women's place may have been in the home in 17th century Kayseri, but there was a fair chance that she had a little nest egg tucked away, owned some animals, a field, or even her own home. Such a situation is very much in accord with the strictures of Islamic law, even though it differs considerably from the stereotype of Muslim or Ottoman women. The successful participation of women in the business of credit in the city probably depended upon the existence of well-organized credit and business procedures and of a vigorous court.<sup>46</sup>

Four of the following chapters address juridical concerns. These are Carl F. Petry's study of a divorce-case in fifteenth-century Mamlūk Egypt, Yvonne J. Seng's review of court cases involving women in the Istanbul suburb of Üsküdar during the sixteenth century, Leslie Peirce's investigation of divorce procedures in the courts of 'Aintab in eastern Anatolia during the same period, and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr's study of the evolving operation of the courts as they affected women in eighteenth-century Istanbul.

The representation of women in traditional Middle Eastern (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, etc.) literatures raises questions of great complexity: the extent to which fiction reflects some kind of reality;

the authenticity of different voices; and the imposition by male authors of a particular point of view. As Jacob Lassner warned, "using literary sources to reconstruct social environments is problematic to say the least. There is no adequate way to interview or observe the dead and the silent. Authors, identifiable and anonymous, remain in the form of extant texts, but the response of contemporaneous readers to these sources and the historical contexts that inform written works are much less accessible."<sup>47</sup>

There is renewed interest at the present time in the *Alf Layla wa-Layla* [The Thousand and One Nights], in some of which tales women appear assertive, manipulative, and very much in control. The same may be said of some pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and of the *sīra* [or *geste*] literature, with its warrior women,<sup>48</sup> of whom Remke Kruk singles out for consideration here the colorful figure of Nūrā. In both Arabic and Persian romances, such as the 'Antar cycle, and the various versions of the Laylā and Majnūn, Yūsuf and Zulaykhā, and *Khusraw* and *Shīrīn* stories, and perhaps above all in Niẓāmī's *Haft Paykar*,<sup>49</sup> there are portraits of fictional women that call for careful evaluation. In this regard, the medieval Islamic concept of love is clearly of prime importance.<sup>50</sup> Firdawsī, of course, gave the readers of the *Shāh-nāma* a gallery of glowing heroines without equal in the literatures of the Middle East. Here, Olga M. Davidson examines but one aspect of their roles, as mourners shaping powerful funeral dirges. It would be difficult to find a better example of the tradition of heroic women than in *The Book of Dede Korkut*. Geoffrey L. Lewis discusses the heroines and episodes in that epic which echo the traditions of the Oghuz transplanted into an eastern Anatolian setting.

Two chapters address the role of individual women as wielders of political power. Farhad Daftary's study of Şayyida Ḥurra, the Ṣulayḥid ruler of Yemen who acted on behalf of the Fāṭimid caliph-imāms in Cairo during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and Peter Jackson's analysis of the career of Raḍiyya bint Iltutmish, daughter of a thirteenth-century sultan of Delhi who ruled the sultanate in her own name as an independent ruler until overthrown by resentful *amīrs*. Other women, acting less directly, exercised their influence from behind the scenes, proffering counsel, upholding religious values, and supporting a munificent patronage of the arts. Priscilla Soucek documents the prominent role which the women

of Tīmūr's household occupied in the cultural life of the Tīmūrid court. To the historian today, however, the interlocking roles of political adviser, pious role-model, patron of charitable endowments, and sustainer of artistic accomplishment frequently elude differentiation. Coming with various approaches and utilizing different kinds of source-material, Maria Szuppe, Kathryn Babayan, Ronald Ferrier, and Stephen P. Blake explore ways in which elite women in Šafavid Persia made their presence felt. Blake, however, suggests that the influence of court women was even greater in Mughal Delhi than in Šafavid Isfahan, while Gregory C. Kozlowski stresses the centrality of Tīmūrid women in the life of the Mughal court, especially as models of Islamic piety. All five are concerned primarily with elite women. In the figure of Bibi Fāṭima, Gavin Hambly exhumes the meager facts relating to the life of a harem woman of indeterminate origin, whose status and functions illuminate from a somewhat different perspective the world of the Mughal *andarūn*.

Michael H. Fisher explores the feminine elements which played so important a part in the culture of the Mughal successor-state of Awadh (Oudh), while Richard B. Barnett examines the careers of the "Begums of Oudh," whose wrongs, trumpeted by Sheridan, briefly engaged the House of Commons during the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Across the Indian Ocean, Idris al-Hasan and Neil McHugh offer a compelling portrait of yet another larger-than-life figure, Sitt Našra bint 'Adlān, in the Jazira of the Blue Nile and the White Nile.

With the exception of those chapters which are concerned with juridical procedures, virtually all the subjects of these studies are women who, however obscure their origins may have been, functioned at the highest levels of society: queen-mothers, royal wives and sisters, concubines, and the women who served them. It is important to remember, however, that below the elite, most women were engaged in some kind of economic activity. The *hijāb* was not for the poor. Women were shopkeepers and artisans. They were employed on a massive scale in the principal industry of the medieval Muslim world, the manufacture of textiles, and it is worth recalling that its most ubiquitous surviving artifacts, the hand-woven prayer-rugs and carpets beloved of the west, are silent reminders of the unremitting toil of lower-class women throughout the ages.

Women worked the land and their labor was crucial to the pastoral nomadic economy, as it still is today. Beside the townswomen, peasants, and nomads was a vast submerged population of slaves, often not clearly differentiated in terms of lifestyle from the subaltern women who were technically 'free.'

Further research may confirm, modify, reject, or re-define the traditional stereotypes of a misogynistic Muslim *Weltanschauung*, possibly in quite ambiguous ways. It is, as medievalists of all kinds are aware, immensely difficult to penetrate the mind-set and thought-processes of men and women who lived centuries ago. The following two passages reflect some of the problems in interpretation inherent in the written text. The first passage is by a Muslim scholar, Minhāj-i Sirāj Jūzjānī, the only recorded eye-witness for the reign of Sulṭān Raḍīyya bint Ilutmish. One would have supposed an author with his antecedents to have been repelled at the thought of a woman exercising sovereignty, but, in fact, his response is untypically generous:

Sultan Radiyya—may she rest in peace—was a great sovereign, and wise, just, and beneficent, the patron of the learned, a dispenser of justice, the cherisher of her subjects, and of warlike skills, and was endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualities required of kings; but, as she did not attain the destiny, in her creation, of being computed among men, of what advantage were all these excellent qualifications unto her?<sup>51</sup>

The second echoes the ambiguity of the passage above, as well as expressing a subconscious irony. It comes from the *Iskandar-nāma* of the fourteenth-century Ottoman poet, Aḥmadī, and contains this eulogy of Sātī Beg, the daughter of the Ilkhān Öljeytü, and a contemporary of the early Ottoman sultans:

Although she was a woman, she was wise,  
She was experienced, and she had good judgment.

Whatever task she undertook, she accomplished,  
She succeeded at the exercise of sovereignty.

There are many women who are greater than men,  
There are many men who are baser than women.

What is manhood? It is generosity, intelligence and piety.  
Whoever possesses these three things is surely a man.<sup>52</sup>

## NOTES

1. Ronald C. Jennings, "Women in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records—The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 53–54.
2. Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 10 vols. (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), vol. 3, pp. 173 and 187.
3. Philip K. Hitti, *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah Ibn-Munqidh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 164.
4. An early example of a publication devoted to Muslim women was Nicolas Perron's *Femmes arabes avant et depuis l'Islamisme* (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1858), a six-hundred-page study covering the period down to the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn (198–218/813–33), followed by such examples as A. Wilken's *Das Matriarchat bei den alten Arabern* (Leipzig: O. Schulze, 1884); I. de Neval's *Systeme legislative musulman: mariage* (St. Petersburg: Trenke and Fusnot, 1890); W. Robertson Smith's *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903); Henri Lammens's *Fatima et les filles de Mahomet* (Rome: Sumptibus Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1912); E. Westermarck's *Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914); I. Lichtenstadter, *Women in the 'Aiyam al-'Arab* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1935); and down to Gertrude H. Stern's *Marriage in Early Islam* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1939), and "The first women converts in early Islam," *Islamic Culture* 13 (1939): 290–305.
5. Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam* (London: Christophers, 1922; revised edition, 1935), pp. 256–57. It may be supposed that these observations were not necessarily borne out by his daily experience in the courts of law.
6. *American Journal of Semitic Studies* 58 (1941): 1–22.
7. *American Journal of Semitic Studies* 58 (1941): 259–84.
8. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 1 (1942): 106–26, 341–68
9. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942; repr. Middle East Series, New York: Arno Press, 1973.
10. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946; repr. Chicago: Midway Reprints, 1974.
11. For the Islamic world, this would include *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikkie R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); and Wiebke Walther, *Women in Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishing, 1993).
12. New York: Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988. In the same breath should be mentioned a groundbreaking article of the previous decade, Franz Rosenthal, "Fiction and Reality: Sources for the Role of Sex in Medieval Muslim Society," in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, ed. A.L. al-Sayyid Marsot (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1979), pp. 3–22.

13. I. Goldziher, "Le culte des saints chez les Musulmans" *Revue de l'Histoire des religions* 2 (Paris, 1880): 257–351; see pp. 286–95. The quotation in Perron is from p. 350. For an English translation of Goldziher, see *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1966–71), vol. 2, pp. 270–79.

14. al-Sayyida Nafisa was the great-granddaughter of Imām Ḥasan, himself the grandson of the Prophet. Celebrated for her learning and piety, her mausoleum near the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn became a focus of pilgrimage. See: s.v. "al-Saiyida Nafisa," EI(I), pp. 826–27. al-Sayyida Zaynab bint Muḥammad was the sister of 'Alī, the first Shī'ite Imām.

15. Margaret Smith, *Rābi'a the Mystic and Her Fellow Saints in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928.)

16. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 426.

17. Schimmel, pp. 426–35. See also Ruth Roded, *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), pp. 91–113.

18. J. Spencer Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 18.

19. Trimmingham, p. 18.

20. See C.L. Huart, *Les saintes des derviches tourneurs*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1918), and Speros Vyronis, "The Muslim Family in 13th–14th Century Anatolia as Reflected in the Writings of the Mawlawi Dervish Eflaki," in *The Ottoman Empire (1300–1389)*, ed. E. Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1993), pp. 213–23.

21. Julian Baldick, *Imaginary Muslims: The Uwaysi Sufis of Central Asia* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

22. Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), vol. 2, pp. 366–68. See also Roded, *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections*, pp. 63–89.

23. Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 52–53.

24. Chamberlain, p. 81.

25. Chamberlain, p. 113. See also Jonathan Berkey, "Women and Education in the Mamlūk Period," in *Women in Middle Eastern History*, ed. N.R. Keddie and B. Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 143–57, and J. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992).

26. Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1382* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), p. 130.

27. P.M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades* (London: Longman, 1886), p.



28. H.A.R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society, 1958–) vol. 2, pp. 340–41. See also R.M. Savory, s.v. “Baghdād Khātūn,” EI(2), vol. 1, pp. 908–909.

29. “Among the Turks and the Tatars,” wrote Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, “their wives enjoy a very high position; indeed, when they issue an order they say in it ‘By command of the Sultan and the Khātūns.’ Each khātūn possesses several towns and districts and vast revenues, and when she travels with the sultan she has her own separate camp.” Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, vol. 2, p. 340.

30. Gibb, vol. 2, pp. 480–89.

31. Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), caption to plate 4.

32. H.R. Roemer, “The Safavid Period” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6: *The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. P. Jackson and L. Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 254–56.

33. P.M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades* (London: Longman, 1986), pp. 82–85. See also Götz Schregle, *Die Sultanin von Ägypten: Šağarat ad-Durr in der arabischen Geschichtsschreibung und Literatur* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1961).

34. Stanley Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, vol. 6, *The Coins of the Mongols in the British Museum* (London: Longmans and Co., 1881), pp. lvii and 103–106.

35. This brief resumé of the careers of these remarkable women is taken from Ann K.S. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 271–87, which contains full references to the sources.

36. Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 127–33, 209–15.

37. Sheila S. Blair, *The Monumental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), p. 7. See also pp. 88–90 and 126–27.

38. Mu‘in al-Dīn ibn Zarkub *Shīrāzī*, *Shīrāz-nāma*, ed. Ismā‘il Vā‘iz Javādī (Tehran, 1350/1972), pp. 66–67.

39. Tariq al-Janabi, “New materials for a study of post-Saljuq monuments in Iraq: the Mausoleum of the Green Dome at Kirkuk,” in *The Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia*, ed. R. Hillenbrand (Costa Mesa, California: Undena Publications, 1994), pp. 29–37.

40. Chinmoy Dutt, *Catalogue of Arabic and Persian Inscriptions in the Indian Museum Calcutta* (Calcutta: The Indian Museum, 1967), pp. 43–44.

41. Roya Marafat, “Timurid Women: Patronage and Power,” *Asian Art* 6 (1993): 29–49.

42. Nora Sadek, “Rasulid Women: Power and Patronage,” *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 22 (1989): 121–35, and *idem*,

"In the Queen of Sheba's Footsteps: Women Patrons in Rasulid Yemen," *Asian Art* 6 (1993): 15–27.

43. Aḥmad 'Abd ar-Rāziq, "Trois fondations féminines dans l'Égypte mamlouke," *Revue des études islamiques* 41 (1973): 95–126.

44. Maria Szuppe, "La participation des femmes de la famille royale à l'exercice du pouvoir en Iran Safavide au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle (première partie)," *Studia Iranica* 23 (1994): 211–58.

45. Ülkü Ü. Bates, "Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey," in *Women in the Muslim World*, ed. Louis Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 245–60, and *idem*, "The Architectural Patronage of Ottoman Women" *Asian Art* 6 (1993): 51–64.

46. Ronald C. Jennings, "Loans and Credit in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records: The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16 (1973): 168–216. See also Jennings, "Women in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records: The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri," in the same publication: 18 (1975): 53–114.

47. Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Post-biblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 2.

48. Remke Kruk, "Warrior Women in Arabian Popular Romance: Qannāṣa bint Muzāḥim and other Valiant Ladies," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 24 (1993): 213–30, and 25 (1994): 16–33. Warrior women also appear in the Anatolian *ghāzī* epics. See Irène Mélikoff, *La geste de Melik Danismend*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie d'Istanbul, 1960) vol. 1, pp. 129–31.

49. An excellent translation of Niẓāmi's *Haft Paykar* by Julie S. Meisami has recently become available (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

50. For example, J.S. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) and *idem*, "Maṣ'ūdī on Love and the Fall of the Barmakids," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1989): 253–77. Interesting related material is to be found in Maria J. Viguera, "Aṣluḥu li'l-ma'ālī: On the Social Status of Andalusī Women," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), pp. 709–24.

51. Minhāj-i Sirāj Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, trans. H.G. Raverty, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1881), vol. 1, pp. 637–38.

52. Quoted in Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 274.



THREE QUEENS, TWO WIVES, AND A  
GODDESS: ROLES AND IMAGES OF WOMEN  
IN SASANIAN IRAN

*Jenny Rose*

*This chapter uses relevant Zoroastrian texts, contemporary iconography, and plastic art forms to explore the various roles and images of women in Sasanian Iran.*

The Sasanian dynasty ruled the second Persian Empire for over four hundred years, from the victory of its first king, Ardashīr I, over the Parthian ruler, Ardabān V, in c. 224 CE, to the death of the last Sasanian monarch, Yazdegird III, in 651 CE. Ardashīr, a local ruler in the province of Pārs, was said to be a descendant of Sāsān, hence the term 'Sasanian.'

During this period, the empire was ruled by the King of Kings, a title originally used by the monarchs of the first Persian empire, and adopted from them by the Parthians. The Sasanian dynasty included many strong male leaders who campaigned against the Romans and Byzantines in the west and the Huns in Central Asia. We know of many of the achievements of such men from the reliefs carved in stone during that period,<sup>1</sup> and from the scholarly and literary output in the second half of the sixth century under the rule of Khosrow I (r. 531–79). References to the social structure of Iran found in such material tend to focus on male functionaries and officials, providing information about the role and status of warriors and priests; about military and civil administration; and about the immense wealth and the ceremony at court.<sup>2</sup>

During Sasanian times, Iran was identified as the place where the 'good religion'—Zoroastrianism—predominated. The first Sasanian king, Ardashīr I, brought together the oral texts of the

Avesta (the Zoroastrian holy texts), previously preserved locally on the orders of the Parthian king Valakhsh. From these texts, the high priest compiled a canon of authoritative works.<sup>3</sup> Two centuries later, these works were committed to writing in the specially invented Avestan alphabet. Interpretation [Middle Persian, *zand*] of these texts was written in Middle Persian and remains an invaluable source of information about the rituals and customs of the Zoroastrians, both before and during the Sasanian period.

We know from Zoroastrian documents and tradition that the religion was (and remains) patriarchal. Within the Zoroastrian community, the priesthood is male, the official life of the religion is in men's hands, the holy texts were all composed by men, the religion is patrilineal, and women do not appear in the genealogies. But the Zoroastrian woman's role within the community has never been purely passive. Although the written sources concerning the role of women are meager, the Zoroastrian community today bears witness to a long period of oral transmission. In order to determine what was the 'traditional' role of women, it is sometimes possible to cite relevant references from the early sources, such as the Avesta (particularly the Yashts and the Vendidad), and the later Middle Persian or Pahlavi texts. Sometimes one can do no more than refer to common practices within the Indian and Iranian Zoroastrian communities and deduce that these probably go back to Sasanian times, perhaps earlier. Since the upkeep of the home and the education of young children was the traditional concern of the women of the household, their role in transmitting religious tenets and customs may be presumed to have been considerable. It seems that, due to the zeal of the priesthood throughout the Sasanian period, there were significant developments in observance for both priests and laity.<sup>4</sup> Those developments which related particularly to matters of purity and pollution in the household would have had a direct impact on the everyday lives of Zoroastrian women.

As far as matters relating to family and family law in Sasanian times are concerned, not much was known from domestic and foreign sources until quite recently. Zoroastrian sources included such Middle Persian texts as the *Dēnkard* and *Shāyest nē Shāyest*, and the later Persian Rivāyats, which provide evidence of the continuity of tradition. *Andarz*, or wisdom literature intended for the laity, is also a source of information concerning the basic doctrines of the faith, moral principles, and the duties of the faithful.<sup>5</sup>

The gap in our knowledge was partially filled through the discovery of the *Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān*,<sup>6</sup> the “Book of 1,000 Legal Judgments.” This was written in the Sasanian period by a jurist and deals with Sasanian law.<sup>7</sup> It seems to have been intended for the author’s fellow lawyers and includes many legalistic expressions that are never defined and therefore remain unclear. The text introduces a large number of actual and hypothetical legal cases and presents the ensuing legal decisions, often naming the parties involved and including the differing jurists’ opinions regarding the case.<sup>8</sup> Bartholomae was the earliest to draw attention to the role of women in MHD, which remains a valuable source of information about the legal rights, responsibilities and status of women during that period.<sup>9</sup>

To know more about the women of this period, we also have recourse to various forms of art. Female figures represented on rock reliefs, coins, terracotta and silverware from the period include goddesses, queens, and noble women, as well as those of uncertain rank and significance. Although these figures are often stylized, we can learn significant details about their physical appearance, dress, and adornment, and can often differentiate between their functions.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter will focus on the two different sources of information concerning women in Sasanian Iran; the written text, which delineates their role in the law as ethically sanctioned by the Zoroastrian religion and derived from the Avesta and its *zand*; and the iconography and plastic art which depicts their appearance, albeit stylized. It is also appropriate in this context to consider the place of the goddess Anāhīd, who was represented both in text and in art and who was of great importance in the devotional lives of Zoroastrians throughout the Sasanian period.

#### TWO WIVES: A ZOROASTRIAN TEXT

MHD was collated at the beginning of the seventh century by Farrokhmard-i Wahrāmān from the court records and case histories of Sasanian lawyers, decrees of state officials, and countless other sources.<sup>11</sup> The dating is given as just before the downfall of the Sasanians, since the last king mentioned in MHD is Khosrow II (601–28).<sup>12</sup> Just as the Sasanian dynasty was being threatened by physical attack from the Arabs, so the Zoroastrian tradition was facing a serious challenge from the faith of Islam.

Despite Zoroastrian teaching that men and women were spiritually equal,<sup>13</sup> according to tradition a woman was always under the tutelage of a male—at first, her father or brother, later her husband. The male head of the house [*kadag-khwadāy*] held the power in the family [*sālārīh-i dūdag*] and his daughter and wife were subordinate to him.

MHD, although ambiguous in places, provides insight into the role and status of women in the higher ranks of the Zoroastrian community towards the end of the Sasanian period. In general, it attests to the importance of their position, although in certain judgments they are placed on equal footing with a slave.<sup>14</sup> One case decision reports that “Whenever a wife or a slave receives physical maltreatment in the presence of the master of the house, then he will be fined as well as the perpetrator of the offence.”<sup>15</sup>

#### MARRIAGE

MHD alludes to two types of marriage, the *pādikhshāy* and the *čagar*. Bartholomae maintained that in theory the normal Sasanian family was founded on polygamy, but that in reality the number of wives depended on the means of the husband, and that those who were not from the well-to-do classes had only one wife.<sup>16</sup>

The principal wife was known as the *zan-i pādikhshāyīh* [wife in authority] referred to in the law cases as ‘*kadag-bānūg*,’ the lady of the house. She was apparently independent, with full authority over the internal running of the house, the upbringing of the children, and the organization of the other members of the household. Her husband could write a legal document which gave her the right to equal use of his capital. This right could be withdrawn, however, if she was found to be “insubordinate.”<sup>17</sup> For the woman to be a full, *pādikhshāy* wife, she first had to obtain the consent to marry from the head of her household, whether father or brother. It is not known if the number of *pādikhshāy* wives was limited, but the case of a man who has two *pādikhshāy* wives is often referred to in questions of law.<sup>18</sup>

The *čagar-zan* was a second wife, or remarried widow, who still belonged to her former husband. In a *pādikhshāy* marriage, an impotent husband was able to give his wife as a ‘*čagar*’ wife to someone else, without relinquishing his authority over her, so that any children by that second marriage would be recognized as his heirs. The legal condition of the two types of wife was different.<sup>19</sup> It

appears that it was also possible for a *pādikhshāy* wife to be formally released from a childless marriage so that she could enter voluntarily into a 'čagar' marriage to produce heirs for her childless dead brother or father, or another male member of her family without issue.<sup>20</sup> She was then taking on the role known as 'stūr' [guardian].

Like the *pādikhshāy* wife, the *čagar* wife received a marriage gift of a stipulated amount that was hers to keep, and enjoyed the same maintenance as other members of the household in terms of accommodation, food, and clothing. She also received a small annual income as long as she was of service in the house, but remained subservient to the *pādikhshāy* wife and could not inherit. It seems that she could acquire the rights of a *pādikhshāy* wife on the death of the latter, or on account of the children she bore, who now became significant with regard to marriage and inheritance.<sup>21</sup>

The father was responsible for the maintenance of sons until they came of age, daughters until they married, and *pādikhshāy* wives until they died.<sup>22</sup> If the head of the household bequeathed his wealth as a gift to another (even if it was to his wife), then a certain amount was generally withheld for the maintenance of the wife and under-age children.<sup>23</sup> A man was allowed to dispose of moneys that he had pledged to his wife and children without having to replace it. This applied to both the *pādikhshāy* and the *čagar* wife.<sup>24</sup>

When a daughter from a good family reached the age of fifteen (the age of maturity, according to tradition), it fell upon the father to choose a suitable husband. If the father was dead, it was up to whoever was the new head of the house (usually the oldest son) to fulfil this obligation. If she was from a wealthy house, then suitors would not have been lacking. A daughter could declare to her father that she did not want to marry, and could not be compelled to do so. She was not punished in any way for this decision, nor did she lose her allowance.<sup>25</sup>

The establishment of the dowry appears to have been of significance in the marriage negotiations and formulas for nuptial agreements exist. The husband was obliged to give a marriage gift of a stipulated amount to his new bride, which then became her possession, and could not be reclaimed by him in the case of separation.

If a father failed in his duty to find his daughter a husband and she entered into an unauthorized "love-match," then she was still supported by her father and kept her share of the inheritance. If she



did not break off the objectionable relationship, then she faced a reduction in her inheritance. Such cases seem to have happened quite frequently, since there are several rulings as to how children from such a relationship should be treated and what should happen if their mother then entered into a legitimate marriage.<sup>26</sup> If a man slept with an unmarried woman, then he was expected to enter into a legal marriage with her.<sup>27</sup>

According to the *Rivāyat-ī Hēmīt-ī Ashawahishtān*, a late ninth-early tenth-century work reflecting Sasanian practice, divorce was possible for the *pādikhshāy* couple, if both were in agreement, but not solely on account of the husband's impotence. The husband could seek divorce without the agreement of the wife, but had to prove her certain guilt in committing activities such as prostitution, sorcery, refusal to obey an order concerning one of her duties, "sinful refusal to sleep with her husband," not abstaining from intercourse during menstruation, concealment of the fact that she was menstruating (the Zoroastrian tradition has, until quite recent times, advocated separation during menstruation), adultery, or committing a deliberate sin which could afflict the body or soul.<sup>28</sup> In this instance, the duty of remaining chaste and ritually pure rests firmly with the woman.

From the legal opinions contained in *MHD*, it seems that the divorced wife was entitled to keep the dowry that she had brought into the marriage, but that any income apart from her dowry which she had generated through her own work or capital investment would remain with her husband.<sup>29</sup>

#### SLAVERY

Apart from the two types of wives mentioned above, in the more powerful households there were also female slaves and women captured in war.<sup>30</sup> Such women often served as concubines to the master of the house. The children of such unions were brought up by the householder, or his successor, but the latter had no legal claim over them as slaves. The children of female slaves appear to have had more rights than those of male slaves. The child of a male slave and free woman could be bequeathed, sold, or given as a slave by the master of the house, whereas the child of a female slave and a free male could not be transferred as the property of another.<sup>31</sup> It seems that a slave could marry a free woman, provided the permission of the master was obtained, but it is unlikely that such marriages occurred frequently.

## INHERITANCE

MHD includes cases of succession, including that of the family fire. On the death of her husband, the widow inherited the same amount as her sons. This included not only his wealth, but also his debts.<sup>32</sup> If, however, the widow and the new head of the house both took an oath that they were ignorant of any debts on the part of the deceased, they were released from payment.<sup>33</sup>

The section MHD 21–24 is concerned mostly with female succession. It details several cases where the deceased and his sons have died without other offspring, and the married daughter inherits the brother's portion as a guardian [*stūrih*]. In this case, she is referred to specifically as 'heiress' [*āyōkēn*], in that she undertakes to produce an heir and namesake for the deceased.<sup>34</sup> In this instance, any wealth inherited was intended to protect and continue the family line, rather than for the benefit of the individual woman.

An unmarried daughter could be a hereditary successor to her father alongside her brother, but usually inherited about half as much, unless her father had specified otherwise, which might be the case if she had cared for him in his old age.<sup>35</sup> As long as she remained unmarried, she held as much right to disposal of the capital and its return as the son, and in this case was also responsible for the payment of any debts outstanding on her father's estate.<sup>36</sup>

An adopted daughter had no claim to the inheritance of the estate of her adoptive father, apart from any portion expressly allocated to her by her father. In contrast, an adopted son who, as an adult, was "exercising that sonship," was granted the estate. Adoption of a daughter was less common than that of boys, and was usually for the purpose of providing an impoverished girl with accommodation or the opportunity to work. She could move into the house of the adoptive father as soon as the adoption became legal.<sup>37</sup> If a man died without a wife, or his wife was not Zoroastrian, or his only under-aged heir became an apostate, then a substitute heir had to be legally appointed.<sup>38</sup>

Fire was also part of the hereditary possession of a given family.<sup>39</sup> A daughter could inherit the family- or hearth-fire from her father. If she married, her husband would assume responsibility for the fire. Opinion was divided as to who would assume responsibility in case of the divorce or death of the daughter.<sup>40</sup> It seems that a woman could bequeath a fire to her husband and children, provided she left a will to that effect.<sup>41</sup>

## LAW SUITS

Normally, the head of the house would represent his family in matters of law. If, however, he had died and had no adult son to succeed him, his responsibilities were assumed by a testamentary or legally-appointed representative. What is of interest here is that this nominated head of the house could not usually represent the family alone in lawsuits brought by or against the family, but shared this duty with the *kadag-bānūg*. In various such cases recorded in MHD, the *kadag-bānūg* is recognized as being legally competent, although only when she acts in tandem.<sup>42</sup> If the deceased man had more than one wife, legal action against the family was only admissible if it was taken against all the wives. If the deceased's son was of age, then the participation of the widow was not required.<sup>43</sup>

## EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

The upbringing of children was the responsibility of the mother until they were aged five, when the formal education of boys began. We do not have much information about the education of girls, whose future seems to have been limited to that of the dutiful *kadag-bānūg*, but some evidence about the education of boys from the upper ranks of society is found in the Pahlavi text, "King Khosrow and the Page."<sup>44</sup> This text, purporting to be based on a test given by Khosrow I to his page, concerns the ideal education for a young Sasanian aristocrat. The boy demonstrates his knowledge of writing, hunting, polo-playing, chess, music, games, apparel, food, wines, perfumes, and women. Unvala maintains that the contents of the text "formed a favourite subject of entertainment in the later days of the Sasanian empire."<sup>45</sup>

The text alludes to women several times, indicating that their various roles were significant in the experience of the page. We learn about the favorite perfumes of the women of the court when the page compares the scents of various flowers to the scent of women: "the scent of the violet is just like the scent of young girls" (v. 82); "the scent of the musk flower is just like the scent of a young bride" (v. 88); and "the scent of a white rose is just like the scent of an old woman" (v. 89).<sup>46</sup> He informs us that the scent of noble women and courtesans was different (vv. 75 and 78),<sup>47</sup> and thus we learn that two distinct ranks of women existed at court.

Although they were probably denied access to the art of writing, we do know that some women were fine musicians, and that their

regular audience would have been women. When quizzed by Khosrow, the page states that the best musician is the beautiful girl who plays the *chang* in the harem and whose voice is high and melodious.<sup>48</sup> Women holding a variety of musical instruments are frequently found in Sasanian art, and are usually in dancing poses, “draped or undraped.”<sup>49</sup>

The page later describes to the king which woman he considers to be the best and, interestingly, does not begin with the most desirable physical attributes, but states, “That woman is the best who in her thoughts is a friend of man” (v. 96). He then details the ideal stature, figure and features of the ‘best’ woman.<sup>50</sup>

One occasion is recorded in MHD which indicates that a Sasanian woman’s education was extended beyond the domestic to include scholarly reasoning, and perhaps even the study of the law. It reports the account of a learned lawyer’s experience on the way to the courthouse. He had passed five seated women who stopped him and one of them posed questions concerning particular cases of guaranteeing a loan. He responded to all her questions until she asked him one that he was unable to answer. At which point, one of the other women said, “Sir, don’t burst your brains thinking of an answer. Just say: ‘I don’t know.’ Besides, the matter is clear from the verdict and statement of So and So.”<sup>51</sup>

#### A GODDESS

Ardwīsūr Anāhīd [the Middle Persian form of Avestan, Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā] is a complex and important *yazata* [‘being worthy of worship’] who had been iconographically associated with particular aspects of the Zoroastrian tradition since the Achaemenid period.<sup>52</sup> Her popularity continued through the Parthian period into the Sasanian, when it developed to the extent that “there is little doubt that under the Sasanians, Anāhīd overshadowed all other female divinities as far as private prayers and devotions were concerned....”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, there is much evidence that her cult remained an influence in Iran well into Islamic times.<sup>54</sup>

Ardwīsūr Anāhīd was an important divinity to the Sasanian monarchy. The dynastic temple at Estakhr, the capital of Pārs, was dedicated to her and the Sasanian kings were crowned there, although their capital was at Ctesiphon. Anāhīd appears to have been revered as the patron deity of the Sasanian dynasty, and her role particularly linked to their investiture. The eponymous founder of the dynasty,

Sāsān, is referred to as the chief priest of a fire temple at Estakhr dedicated to Anāhīd,<sup>55</sup> and it seems that later monarchs continued to regard themselves as hereditary guardians of her temple there. It is recorded in later sources that when the Sasanians (such as Ardashīr I) were victorious in battle, the heads of the enemy were hung against the walls of the temple at Estakhr as an offering.<sup>56</sup> As yet, the sanctuary at Estakhr has not been discovered.<sup>57</sup>

Yasht 5, one of the longest and best preserved of the Avestan hymns, celebrates Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā as the source of all the waters of the world. She is immediately concerned with the well-being of the community, women in particular. Here, the activity and physical attributes of the goddess are described in some detail. She is spoken of as being righteous [*ashavan*], increasing life, herds, wealth, and country (Yt. 5.2). She gives to her worshippers victory against their enemies (Yt. 5.34ff.) and possessions such as household goods and weaponry (Yt. 5.130). It is she who, as a water divinity, brings fertility; it is she “who makes the seed of all males pure and purifies the womb of all females for bearing children, who makes childbirth easy for all females and who provides milk at the proper time for all females” (Yt. 5.3). Marriagable girls ask her for a brave husband, and young women about to give birth ask her for an easy delivery (Yt. 5. 87).

Anāhitā is described as a beautiful, strong and noble maiden, standing erect and wearing beaver skins. She wears a costly, pleated garment of golden material, which is ‘high-girded’ at the waist, revealing well-shaped, prominent breasts. She always wears a necklace around her beautiful neck and is adorned with four-sided golden earrings, a golden eight-sided diadem decorated with a hundred stars, ribbons and a prominent rim, and golden shoes (Yt. 5.126–29).

This seems to be a description of a temple statue, perhaps one of those set up by Artaxerxes II (404–359 BCE),<sup>58</sup> although no existing images correspond precisely to the literary description. According to Boyce, the fact that Shāpūr I’s Queen of Queens, his wife-daughter, was called Ādur-Anāhīd [Anāhīd of the Fire] suggests that the image had been replaced by the more usual Zoroastrian focus of veneration, fire, early on in the Sasanian period,<sup>59</sup> and that Anāhīd was by then officially venerated without statues. Presumably Ādur-Anāhīd was named in honour of the fire at Estakhr, which seems to have been consecrated to Anāhīd herself.<sup>60</sup>

During the reign of Bahrām II (276–83 CE), the high priest Kirdēr was given responsibility for the two sacred fires at Estakhr, known as “the Fire of Anāhīd the Lady” and “the Fire of Anāhīd-Ardashīr.”<sup>61</sup> Narseh’s Middle Persian inscription at Paikuli (c. 293 CE) invokes “Ohrmazd and all the *yazads* and Anāhīd who is called the Lady.”<sup>62</sup>

According to Duchesne-Guillemin, the image of Anāhīd may be found on the reverse of some of the coins of Khosrow II.<sup>63</sup> The coins show the usual fire altar, from which emerges a female with a radiate nimbus. Duchesne-Guillemin suggests that this figure should be identified as Anāhīd, “*déesse favorite de ce roi,*” whose continuing intimate connection with the fire of the royal family is thus clearly illustrated.<sup>64</sup>

The fact that Anāhīd is depicted on coins indicates that, although her image may have disappeared from the temples, she continued to be portrayed in Sasanian art. Two particular rock reliefs from the period include representations of the divinity.

One generally accepted representation of Anāhīd is found at Naqsh-i Rostam, on the relief depicting the investiture of Narseh (293–302 CE).<sup>65</sup> This relief includes five figures, one of which is a woman. In the center of the relief stands the king, receiving the diadem of monarchy from a female figure, usually identified as Anāhīd. This is in keeping with Narseh’s inscription at Paikuli referred to earlier.

It is appropriate here to describe in detail some of the features of the Naqsh-i Rostam relief. Certain elements are stylized, and seem to reflect the general appearance of women of the time. Other aspects seem to be particular to Anāhīd and are depicted differently in other women. According to Harper, there are only a few representations of females in early Sasanian art among which one can look for parallels of individual depictions. “The scanty evidence that has survived suggests that some variety existed in the form of female hair styles in the third and fourth centuries. The hairdos of royal and divine females in most instances consist of long twisted locks reaching down to the shoulders with shorter curls falling before the ear. When the top of the head is uncovered, the hair is visible drawn up above the head.”<sup>66</sup> Anāhīd has her hair styled in this fashion, arranged in tightly knotted curls above the crown and falling in long ringlets on her shoulders, with short ringlets in front of the ear.<sup>67</sup>

Anāhīd holds out the diadem to the king in her right hand. Her left hand is concealed in the long sleeve of her dress. This last feature is common in the full-length iconography of Sasanian women, as is the covering of the feet by the loose folds of the dress. Perhaps this was a sign of rank for women who did not have to engage in manual labor, or it may reflect an inclination towards modesty in public. The dress is tied at the waist with a ribbon, fastened in a bow with long fluttering ends. A cape, draped loosely back over her shoulders, is fastened on the chest by two ribboned clasps.

As is the case in depictions of Sasanian monarchs and their queens, here also, the crown is a distinguishing feature. Anāhīd wears a mural crown with a border of flutes, similar to, but smaller than, those of Narseh, indicating her role as dynastic deity. A diadem is fastened around the crown with a bow at the back and long ribbons. The large spherical beads that she wears around the neck and as earrings (although the ear on the relief is damaged) are another common feature of noble women of the time. Such beads are often identified as pearls.

According to Trümpelmann, the representation of Anāhīd at Naqsh-i Rostam is of the same type as the female in a relief at Sar Mashhad in Pārs, who stands behind the king (identified as Bahrām II), resting her right hand on his left arm. He therefore identifies her as Anāhīd.<sup>68</sup> Vanden Berghe disputes this identification due to the disparity in crowns; at Sar Mashhad, she is not wearing the mural crown with stepped crenellations.<sup>69</sup>

Anāhīd appears in another investiture scene in the grotto at Tāq-i Bustān near Kirmanshah, probably from the time of Khosrow II. In an *iwan* carved out of the cliff, Ohrmazd and Anāhīd are depicted standing on either side of the king, each holding a diadem with flowing ribbons in their right hand. Anāhīd also holds a ewer in her left hand, from which water flows to the ground, symbolic of her role as guardian of the rivers and bestower of increase.

Apart from the two identifications of Anāhīd at Naqsh-i Rostam and Tāq-i Bustān, there are a few other figures in Sasanian art said to depict the goddess. Some scholars claim that Anāhīd may be represented on Sasanian silver utensils, where a nude or scantily clad woman stands under an arcade holding a flower or fruit, a bird, a small animal or a child.<sup>70</sup> These representations are, however, not certain. Despite the popularity of the goddess, the tendency to identify all such females with Anāhīd must be treated with caution.<sup>71</sup>

Göbl maintains that Anāhīd is physically represented on the reverse of coins minted during the reign of several Sasanian kings, and that she is identified by certain aspects of her crown: the “undulated fillet;” the “arcaded crown;” and the eagle head in the crown.<sup>72</sup> On the right side of the obverse and on the reverse side of the coinage of Bahrām II, there is a female figure who was not the queen (since the queen is often depicted next to Bahrām), but from her eagle-headed or beaver-headed crown, appears to be Anāhīd.<sup>73</sup> Choksy later discusses the features of the crowns and their departure from the description in Yasht 5.<sup>74</sup>

This figure is often depicted on both sides of the coin handing the beribboned diadem of sovereignty or the plain diadem of victory to the king with her right hand.<sup>75</sup> On the reverse of such coins, the king faces the female figure and makes a gesture of reverence to her by raising his right hand, with the palm outward or with bent right forefinger.<sup>76</sup> These elements all point to her identity as Anāhīd. Her physical features are also similar to those found in the description of Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps Anāhīd’s continued visible presence in such art forms during the reign of successive Sasanian monarchs is indicative of a psychological as well as physical return to their origins in Pārs.<sup>78</sup> According to Ṭabarī, at the time of the dynasty’s greatest peril, the last Sasanian king, Yazdegird III, was crowned in “the temple of Ardashīr” at Estakhr.<sup>79</sup> This seems to be a reference to the temple of Anāhīd-Ardashīr at Estakhr which appears in the Kirdēr inscription. Estakhr was captured by the Arab invaders in 651 CE.

### THREE QUEENS: CARVINGS AND COINS

Alongside the rock reliefs of kings, princes, high priests and deities, there are occasional depictions of queens. Lukonin identifies the female to the right of Shāpūr I at Naqsh-i Rajab as his queen.<sup>80</sup> Shāpūr’s inscription at Naqsh-i Rostam uses the title ‘Queen of Queens’ [*Mlkt’n mlkt*] in reference to Ardashīr I’s wife-sister Dēnak (line 23) and Shāpūr’s own wife-daughter, Ādur-Anāhīd (line 18).<sup>81</sup> Dēnak is also represented on an amethyst seal in the Hermitage, where the inscription reads “Dēnak, Queen of Queens, mistress over the persons in the harem.”<sup>82</sup>

According to Lukonin, the title ‘Queen of Queens’ was held by the king’s senior wife, who presided over the women’s quarter [*harem*] of the palace. The title of ‘queen’ or ‘lady’ was held by wives of the king’s sons and of the rulers of *shāhrs*, and the latter title also designated the junior wives of the King of Kings and those of the kings of various *shāhrs*.<sup>83</sup>



## ARDASHĪR-ANĀHĪD

The first, and so far only, reference to a daughter of Bahrām I (273–76 CE) is found on the Barm-i Dilak relief (see figure 1). Here, a male figure standing on the right of the relief holds out his right hand with an object towards a female figure, recognizable as a royal figure because of the ribbons fluttering down from her diadem. Erdmann first identified her as Bahrām II’s Queen of Queens, Shāpūrdukhtag (a granddaughter of Shāpūr I), but others have argued against this.<sup>84</sup> In the spring of 1968, Hinz and Gropp discovered a weathered three-line text in Pahlavi on the relief in between the two figures. Hinz translates the beginning of this text as: “This is the portrait of Ardashīr-Anāhīd, the daughter of Bahrām.” The end of the text has not yet been deciphered.<sup>85</sup>

Hinz maintains that Ardashīr-Anāhīd was the first wife of Bahrām II, since the relief at Barm-i Dilak dates to the earlier part of the king’s reign. At the same time the inscription also reveals the fact that Bahrām II married his sister, since they were both children of Bahrām I, although possibly of different mothers. Ardashīr-Anāhīd obviously did not live much longer, as the coins of Bahrām II do not depict her, but her cousin Shāpūrdukhtag.

## SHĀPŪRDUKHTAG

Although it is often difficult to identify figures when they are not represented in full-length, by studying the dexterous engravings on Sasanian coins it is possible to gain accurate pictures of each of the monarchs, their garments, and their crowns. Shāpūrdukhtag is the first Sasanian queen to be portrayed next to a Sasanian king on a coin.<sup>86</sup> She was the chief queen of her cousin, Bahrām II, who ruled between 276 and 293 CE.

Several of the silver *drachm* and gold *dīnār* coins minted during the reign of Bahrām II feature three busts on the obverse, two facing right and one facing left. Most scholars now agree that the bust second from the left represents a queen or a succession of queens. Choksy’s article on this subject seems to prove conclusively that the figure is a woman whose facial characteristics remain constant throughout the coinage, but whose crown displays four variants, including a boar’s head or horse’s head, representations of the Zoroastrian *yazata* of victory, Bahrām [Avestan, Verethragna].<sup>87</sup> We have only recently known the name of this queen, due to the work of Lukonin who, also in the spring of 1968, reported on a silver coin of Bahrām II in the Hermitage.<sup>88</sup> This coin depicts the



*Figure 1: Relief at Barm-i Dilak. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

queen on the reverse and gives her name as “Shāpūrdukhtag, Queen of Queens.” According to Lukonin, she is the same Shāpūrdukhtag, daughter of King Shāpūr of Mesene, as mentioned in Shāpūr I’s inscription at Naqsh-i Rostam (line 21).

On Relief II at Naqsh-i Rostam, the figure of a person wearing the same form of headgear as on the coins stands immediately to the left of Bahrām II.<sup>89</sup> Hinz identifies this figure as Shāpūrdukhtag.<sup>90</sup> The coinage represents the queen as wearing a tall curved bonnet hemmed with a ribbon, rosettes, or pearls. Such a cap is similar to that worn by the figure on the rock relief at Barm-i Dilak and Sar Mashhad.<sup>91</sup>

The royal couple appears together again on an early Sasanian cup from Georgia, which depicts them and a son in right-facing profile portraits in medallions on the outside. The figure identified as Shāpūrdukhtag again wears a tall curved cap, the brim of which has a row of disks. She has three long twisted locks of hair falling behind her neck.<sup>92</sup>

#### QUEEN BŪRĀN

Various articles have been written about the coinage of Būrān, whose reign began in 630 CE. Numismatists have been particularly interested in the coins minted during her reign, since until recently they have

been fairly rare, and show an unusual obverse portrait of the queen.<sup>93</sup> Her coins are dated from regnal years 1–3, and have been found as far away as China. Examination of such coins prompts further interest on the part of the numismatist as to other facts that can be gleaned about the queen apart from the stylized physical features that appear on the coin.

Little is known about Būrān. She was the daughter of Khosrow II [Parviz] and Maryam, daughter of the Roman Emperor Maurice. According to Ṭabarī, Būrān's brother, Kavād II, killed seventeen of his brothers on the advice of his vizier, but spared his sisters and his brother Ardashīr. The latter became king on Kavād's death, but was assassinated by a usurper, Shāhvarāz.<sup>94</sup> With the help of royal guards loyal to the dynasty, the usurper was overthrown and Būrān succeeded to the throne. She was crowned in Ctesiphon and recompensed one Pus-Farrokh for his aid in reclaiming the throne by making him her minister.

This was a critical era for the Sasanians, since it was during Būrān's reign that the Arabs began their invasion of Iran. According to Bayāni, the Arab incursion caused Būrān to be "so disturbed and unhappy that she passed away in the prime of her life."<sup>95</sup> Būrān is eulogized by Ṭabarī as a queen who made her people happy. He states that on the day of her coronation, Būrān pledged to encourage pious conduct and justice and that "she treated her subjects well, spreading justice, minting coins and repairing stone and wooden bridges. She excused people from payment of outstanding taxes and wrote open letters to them in which she explained how she wished to do well by them."<sup>96</sup> It is also said that she concluded a peace treaty with the emperor of Byzantium, Heraclius.<sup>97</sup>

Although the coins of Būrān are dated for three regnal years, it is likely that she ruled for only sixteen or seventeen months. Indeed, early records of her reign vary as to its length. Firdawsī, in the *Shāhnāma*, puts her reign at six months, and Tha'ālibī puts it at eight months, though Ṭabarī estimates that it lasted sixteen months.<sup>98</sup> According to Drouin, Sasanian rulers counted their regnal years following the calendar and not from the date of accession.<sup>99</sup> If Būrān ascended the throne towards the end of the calendrical year in 630 and ruled for sixteen months until the autumn of 631, then it is possible for her reign to have entered a third year. She was

followed by a series of rulers with short reigns until Yazdegird III acceded to the throne in 632.

The silver *drachms* found show the bust of Būrān in profile. Since the features of the kings vary on their respective coinage, it is reasonable to assume that Būrān's coins are fairly accurate representations of her likeness. Bayāni made a detailed study of the likeness of Būrān on silver *drachms* from various parts of Iran and describes her thus:

Her long hair is seen over her face, breast and back in three ringlets on which floral designs are shown with gems. Two strings of pearls are seen around her neck, with a brooch hanging in the middle. Near the shoulder and on her dress there are two gold flowers in the form of a crescent and star on her breast. A pleated, undulating ribbon is drawn up on the shoulders. She wears a most impressive crown with a golden border in one line and with two strings of pearls on the border. Between the two pearl strings gems have been set on the border and above the border there are three jeweled flowers. Above the crown two most beautiful and delicate golden wings are seen which embrace the moon crescent and a jeweled ball like the sun. On the two sides of the crown there are a crescent, a moon and a star facing the crown and a star behind it. Opposite the face and behind the head the following words are inscribed in Pahlavi: 'Buran' and the popular phrase 'With plentiful glory.'<sup>100</sup>

One gold coin of Būrān is unusual in that it features the only known frontal portrait of the queen and her winged crown. Above the bust, on the left, is again the legend "*afzūd Būrān.*"<sup>101</sup>

#### THE MYSTERY LADY OF TANG-I QANDĪL

The last woman depicted on a rock relief to be considered in this chapter is neither queen nor goddess, but an unidentified female figure who appears carved on a freestanding boulder at Tang-i Qandīl. Three figures are illustrated on the relief; a lady on the left and two dignitaries in Iranian dress. The man in the center is the tallest of the three. There is no inscription, nor figure wearing a crown. The dating is determined by style and was probably carved during the reign of Bahrām II.<sup>102</sup>

Our mystery lady, as Hermann describes her,<sup>103</sup> seems to be a stylized Sasanian woman with many of the details noted in previous descriptions, but with some additional features which provide us with a further glimpse into the dress, accessories and coiffure of Sasanian noble women. Her head is in right profile, with her body

frontal, but slightly curved. Again, the left hand is covered by her sleeve, but raised to her mouth, whilst between the thumb and forefinger of her right hand she holds a tulip-shaped flower, which she proffers to the principal dignitary.

The act of holding a flower is quite a common feature in Sasanian art, and there are illustrations of many varieties of flowers held by both men and women. According to Harper, the form of flower most commonly held by figures on Sasanian rock reliefs, silver vessels, and seals is the three-petalled tulip-like lotus.<sup>104</sup> The rosette with four heart-shaped petals or one such petal was also a popular flower held by female figures.<sup>105</sup>

Again, the figure wears a long dress which covers the feet. It is belted at the waist with long ties. On top of the dress she wears a long-sleeved, calf-length coat, fastened on the chest by a disc. The coat flows down and out from the waist on either side. Her hair appears to be arranged in regular waves ending in small curls on the neck, but she may be wearing a close-fitting ribbed cap. A bunch of curls rises above the hair/cap. The curls are tightly tied at the base with ribbons which curve down over the hair/cap. She wears the popular necklace of large spherical beads, and a trace of earring survives.

#### WHO WERE THEY?

Medallions on silver bowls and terracotta figurines are two other art forms from the Sasanian period depicting female figures. They will be considered briefly here in order to complete the picture as far as we know it.

A silver bowl of early Sasanian origin, now held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is decorated with five identical female profiles on the exterior, one in the center facing right, and four on the sides, two facing right and two facing left (see figure 2). Harper maintains that the importance of the person profiled is indicated by the fact that the artist depicts her five times, not just once.<sup>106</sup> The hairstyles of all five profiles, although varying slightly, are very similar to that of Anāhīd on the Naqsh-i Rostam relief. The woman is obviously from the wealthier classes. "She wears a necklace of beads and an earring with two small beads and an oval pendant. The mantle placed over her shoulders has a pattern of regularly scattered groups of three dots and a dotted border. It is attached at



*Figure 2: Silver Bowl from Iran, 3rd–4th c. CE. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1970, 1970.5.*

the center of the chest by a pin, shown twice as a single circle and three times as a pair of circles."<sup>107</sup>

Another bowl, now in the Iran Bastan Museum, also seems to represent an image of a particular person, identifiable through her dress and general appearance. There are some details that indicate rank and status, but there seems to have been no attempt at an accurate portrayal of the woman's features, which are "essentially type-portraits."<sup>108</sup>

Recently, Simpson and Hermann have drawn attention to another source of information concerning the physical appearance of Sasanian women.<sup>109</sup> They consider three types of female figurines excavated at Merv which belong to a group of forty fragmentary terracottas dated from the sixth to seventh centuries CE.<sup>110</sup> The figures are graceful with loose, flowing, decorated skirts covering their feet. In some of the figures, one hand is raised holding a flat disc mirror between the breasts, while the other hand gathers the skirts. In other versions, both hands are on the chest.

The figurines were mold-pressed and some were brightly painted, as evidenced by surviving traces of paint. Such three-dimensional representation complements the two-dimensional details of the written texts, helping to provide a more complete picture of women in Sasanian Iran.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has focussed both specifically and generally on the role and appearance of certain Sasanian women—those who were important enough, for whatever reason, to have been included by artists and authors in their particular records of the period. From the context of the representation of these women it is reasonable to assume that most of them were from the wealthier Zoroastrian houses. Women from Christian and Jewish backgrounds also figured prominently in the development of the Sasanian empire, and the written and oral records of those two religious traditions bear independent witness to their particular role as subjects of Sasanian rule. Certainly, Christians, Jews, and pagan Turks numbered among the Sasanian queens and concubines, and as such they would doubtless have had to “accept and keep the Zoroastrian purity laws to avoid diminishing the king’s own purity.”<sup>111</sup> The *Shāhnāma* makes much of the close relationship between Shīrin, a Christian, and Khosrow II. She was his favorite wife and at his death is said to have given all her wealth in donations to the fire temple for the sake of his soul.<sup>112</sup> There are many other women portrayed in the legendary stories of the Sasanian dynasty in the *Shāhnāma*; some are heroic, others are less benign. They include daughters of the house of Sāsān, and daughters of the enemy; queens and concubines; and, in contrast to the strong image of Anāhīd, the *peri*—enchantress or witch—who could change her appearance and impose her will on humans. Each plays her own part in the re-telling of Sasanian history, as do the women from the courthouse and those frozen in form on rock, clay, or metal.

#### NOTES

1. Such as the exploits of Shāpūr I (c. 240–72 CE) inscribed on the Ka‘ba-yi Zardusht at Naqsh-i Rostam or of King Narseh at Paikuli in Iraqī Kurdistan.

2. See Chr. Bartholomae, *Die Frau im Sasanidischen Recht* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1924), p. 3.

3. See M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 114.
4. See M. Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1992), pp. 135ff.
5. One important example of this type of literature was the Dādestānī Mēnōg ī Khrad, probably composed in the sixth century. See M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 136f.
6. Henceforward referred to as MHD.
7. Although codified civil and criminal law did not exist in Sasanian times, there was apparently an extensive body of scholarly legal literature. The civil law was highly developed, as can be gleaned from some of the references in the Dēnkard, and, in more detail, in the fragments of MHD.
8. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 6.
9. Another significant discovery was the *corpus juris* of ʾIshōʾbōkhr̄t, a Christian version of Sasanian law, originally in Middle Persian now only extant in a Syrian recension from the second half of the eighth century. It is the work of a Christian Metropolitan (whose name means 'Saved by Jesus'), which he compiled for the Persian Christian community of the time. It is obviously influenced by Byzantine law and Christianity, but appears to use the same sources as MHD.
10. P.O. Harper, "Sources of Certain Female Representations in Sasanian Art," *La Persia Nel Medioevo* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale Dei Linci, 1971), p. 503.
11. M. Macuch, "Rechtskasuistik und Gerichtspraxis zu Beginn des siebenten Jahrhunderts in Iran: Die Rechtssammlung des Farrokhmard i Wahrāmān," *Iranica* 1 (1993):1.
12. Macuch, p. 9f.
13. See Yasna 46.10. Although this text says nothing about the role of women, it states that the gifts of Truth [*Asha*] and Good Purpose [*Vohu Manah*] are bestowed on both sexes, that the religious teachings pertaining to the laity are applicable to both men and women, and that both are eligible to cross the Chinvat Bridge to the best existence.
14. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 7.
15. MHD 1. 5f. (Macuch, p. 24). In the context of this case it is interesting to note that punishment for the robbery and rape of another man's wife was also in terms of a fine (MHD 73.8f; Macuch, p. 492).
16. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 12.
17. Macuch, p. 81, n. 6.
18. Chr. Bartholomae, *Zum sasanidischen Recht* 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1918), p. 35.
19. Christensen refers to them as the two "classes" of wife; see A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1936), p. 318.



20. Macuch, p. 74ff.
21. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 13.
22. MHD 32. 12 (Macuch, p. 243).
23. MHD 29. 10f. (Macuch, p. 225).
24. MHD 32. 1-4 (Macuch, p. 237).
25. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 11.
26. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 11.
27. MHD 83.7f. (Macuch, p. 541; see also p. 545).
28. N. Safa-Isfehiani, ed. and trans., *Rivāyat-ī Hēmīt-ī Ashawahishtān: A Study in Zoroastrian Law*, Harvard Iranian Series 2 (1980), p. 49.
29. Macuch, p. 84.
30. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Histories*, 23. 6. 76.
31. See Macuch, p. 28.
32. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 13.
33. Macuch, p. 135f.
34. Macuch, p. 180.
35. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 14.
36. See Macuch, p. 431f.
37. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 10.
38. MHD 44. 6-8 (Macuch, pp. 319, 347).
39. See J. de Menasce, *Feux et Fondations pieuses dans le droit sassanide* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1964), p. 7ff.; also M. Boyce, "On the Sacred Fires of the Zoroastrians," *BSOAS* 31 (1968): 52-68, 287-89.
40. Macuch, p. 200.
41. Macuch, p. 203. Boyce, citing Modi's translation of MHD, describes one lawsuit regarding the endowment of a sacred fire at the expense of the widow and children of the deceased (Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs*, p. 140).
42. Macuch, pp. 145f, 509.
43. Macuch, p. 147.
44. See J.M. Unvala, *The Pahlavi text 'King Husrav and His Boy'* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1921).
45. Unvala, p. 3.
46. Unvala, p. 33f.
47. Unvala, p. 32.
48. Unvala, p. 29. The *chang* appears to be a lute or harp; see Unvala, p. 27 n. 62.2.
49. Harper, "Female Representations," p. 503.
50. Unvala, p. 35f. In Tha'ālibī's Arabic version of this encounter, which Unvala maintains is based on a later, more complete original than the Persian, the most beautiful and most desirable woman is described as "one to whom the heart opens itself and whom it loves and whom the soul cherishes. The best is one who is neither too aged nor too young; neither too tall nor too small; neither too thin, nor too fat; who has an elegant

shape, beautiful of form, charming in all her personal appearance...who speaks little and has great modesty." (Unvala, p. 45, citing H. Zotenberg's translation of Tha'ālibī).

51. Bartholomae, *Die Frau*, p. 9; MHD 57. 3–12 (Macuch, p. 393). Macuch puts the last sentence in the mouth of the person recounting the incident.

52. M. Boyce, s.v. "Anāhīd (i). Ardwišūr Anāhīd," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 1 (1985), p. 1004.

53. Boyce, s.v. "Anāhīd," p. 1005.

54. Boyce maintains that "most of the many places in Iran named for 'the Maiden' [Dokhtar] or 'the Lady' [Bibi] were once sacred to Anāhīd." See also M. Boyce, "Bibi Shahrbanū and the Lady of Pārs," *BSOAS* 30 (1967): 30–44, which discusses a shrine near the city of Ray devoted to Anāhīd as *Shāhrbānū* [lady of the land] and where to this day Muslim prayers and sacrifices are offered.

55. Th. Nöldeke, trans., *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden aus der arabischen Chronik des Ṭabarī* (Leyden: Brill, 1879), p. 4.

56. Nöldeke, p. 17; also Christensen, p. 166.

57. Several scholars maintain that the temple at Bishāpūr was also dedicated to Anāhīd. This was a sunken temple made by *Shāpūr* I next to the royal palace. (R. Ghirshman, *Iran, Parthes et Sasanides* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 149. There is also said to have been a temple at Kangavar dedicated to Anāhitā (Boyce, s.v. "Anāhīd," p. 1005).

58. See Boyce, s.v. "Anāhīd," p. 1004.

59. Boyce, s.v. "Anāhīd," p. 1005.

60. According to Mas'ūdī, writing in the tenth century CE, one of the most venerated fires of the Mazda-worshippers [Zoroastrians] was that at Persepolis [Estakhr], which was originally a temple "consacré aux idoles," but which had been converted into a fire temple after the idols were removed (Mas'ūdī, *Les Prairies d'Or*, text and French trans., ed. Ch. Pellat, vol. 2 (Paris: Société Asiatique, 1965), p. 541.

61. Line 8, Ka'ba-ye Zardusht inscription: see M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs*, p. 114.

62. Line 10. For other references to Anāhīd as 'lady' see Boyce, "Bibi Shahrbanū," 37, nn. 27, 28.

63. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, "Zoroastrian Religion," *Cambridge History of Iran* 3.2 (1983), p. 897.

64. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *La Religion de l'Iran Ancien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 292.

65. First identified by F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1910), pp. 84–88.

66. P.O. Harper, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period: I Royal Imagery* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981), p. 32.

67. G. Hermann, "Naqsh-i Rustam 5 and 8: Sasanian Reliefs attributed to Hormuzd II and Narseh," *Iranische Denkmäler* 8 (Berlin, 1977): 11. This hairstyle is also illustrated by a seal of Dēnak, wife of Ardashīr I, now in the Hermitage Museum (Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 34).

68. L. Trümpelmann, "Das Sasanidische Felsrelief von Sar Mahad," *Iranische Denkmäler* 5 (1975): 9, 11.

69. See C. Bier, s.v. "Anāhīd (iv). Anāhitā in the Arts," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 1 (1985): p. 1011; Harper also disputes this (Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 38, n. 50).

70. See C. Trever, "À Propos des Temples de la Déesse Anahita en Iran Sassanide," *Iranica Antiqua* 7 (1967): 126. Trever takes these objects to be cultic.

71. See Bier, p. 1011. Harper discusses in detail some of the objects held by the females ("Female Representations," p. 505ff.).

72. R. Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics*, (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt, 1971), p. 45ff.

73. J.K. Choksy, "A Sāsānian Monarch, his Queen, Crown Prince, and Deities: The Coinage of Wahram II." *AJN* 2nd series 1 (1989): 126f.

74. Choksy, "A Sāsānian Monarch," 132.

75. For further discussion of the symbolism of the diadem, see Choksy, 127ff.

76. Choksy, 129f.

77. See Choksy, 131. There are also some Kushano-Sasanian coins from the eastern fringes of the Sasanian empire which portray representations of Anāhitā. For example on coins of Hormizd II (c. 303–09), she is shown with a diadem and the inscription "Anahita zi mrota" [Anāhitā the lady]. There is a Bactrian coin of similar date which shows Anāhitā emerging from the fire.

78. See S. Wikander, *Feuerpriester in Kleinasien und Iran* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1946), p. 55.

79. Nöldeke, p. 397.

80. Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 34, n. 36.

81. Such next-of-kin marriages, termed *khwēdōda* in Middle Persian [Avestan, *khvaēdvadatha*], had been practised by royalty since Achaemenian times. They were advocated by Kirdēr in his inscription at Sar Mashhad (Line 45. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs*, p. 110; also, pp. 53–54.).

82. V.G. Lukonin, "Political, Social and Administrative Institutions, Taxes and Trade," *Cambridge History of Iran* 3.2 (1983), p. 712.

83. Lukonin, "Political, Social and Administrative Institutions," p. 712.

84. See Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 34, n. 36. In his article on the subject, Vanden Berghe puts forward some scholarly identifications of the figure, as well as his own idea that the relief depicts Prince Narseh (later Narseh I) offering a flower to his niece Ardashīr-Anāhīd as a symbol of

reconciliation; see L. Vanden Berghe, s.v. "Barm-e Delak," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 3 (1989): pp. 805f.

85. W. Hinz, *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), p. 218. Gropp, however, gives two variant readings of the inscription; see G. Gropp, "Bericht über eine Reise in West- und Südiran," *AMI*, new series 3 (1970): 201f.

86. M. Bayāni, "Studies on the Numismatics of Puran Dukht, the Sassanian Queen." *Journal of the Regional Cultural Institute* 2. 2 (1969): 117.

87. Choksy, p. 122f. Bahrām Yasht (Yt. 14) 2.9, 15.

88. Hinz, p. 194.

89. Hinz, p. 194.

90. See Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 38, n. 51 for other possible identifications.

91. Choksy, 123; also Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 38. For further discussion of these reliefs, see the comments of Hinz and Trümpelmann.

92. Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 38. Harper adds that "there is, however, no certain evidence in the treatment of the hair or dress that the figure on the Naqsh-i Rostam relief or on the Sargveshi cup is a female, although this is probable."

93. H.M. Malek, "A Survey of Research on Sasanian Numismatics," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 153 (1993): 238.

94. Nöldeke, p. 383ff.

95. Bayāni, 118. Another source states that Būrān was deposed in 631 CE by the inhabitants of Ctesiphon as an unfit ruler; see E. Drouin, "Monnaies de la reine Sassanide Boran ou Pourandokht," *Revue Numismatique* 11 (1893): 171.

96. Nöldeke, p. 391.

97. Nöldeke, p. 392, n. 1.

98. Nöldeke, p. 392.

99. Drouin, 171.

100. *Afzūd*, lit. 'may glory increase,' Bayāni, 120.

101. See R. Kuntz and W.B. Warden, "A Gold Dinar of the Sasanian Queen Buran." *ANSMN* 28 (1983): 133–35.

102. G. Hermann, "The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur: Part 3 The Rock Relief at Tang-i Qandil," *Iranische Denkmäler* 11 (1983): 32. See also E. de Waele, "Sur le bas-relief sassanide de Tang-e Qandil et le 'bas-relief au couple' de Barm-e Dilak," *Revue des archeologues et historiens d'art de Louvain* 11 (1978).

103. Hermann, "Tang-i Qandil," 32.

104. Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 35, n. 39; also Harper, "Female Representations," p. 512.

105. Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 35, n. 39.

106. Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 38; including n. 55.

107. Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 26.

108. Harper, *Silver Vessels*, p. 27.
109. St. John Simpson and G. Herrmann. "Through the glass darkly: Reflections on some ladies from Merv." *Iranica Antiqua* 30 (1995): 141-58.
110. Simpson and Herrmann, 141.
111. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs*, p. 139f.
112. Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, p. 143.

WOMEN IN PRE-ISLAMIC CENTRAL ASIA:  
THE KHĀTŪN OF BUKHARA

*Richard N. Frye*

*Despite the paucity of sources, archaeologists in Central Asia have uncovered representations of the female form in cult objects and on coins, inferring an elevated status for at least elite women.*

It is very difficult to write about the ancient history of Central Asia because of the extreme lack of information, and to find out about women in this place and time is almost impossible. Since written records are not found until the aftermath of the conquests of Alexander of Macedonia (c. 334–23 BC), and are then exceedingly rare and consist of only a sentence or two, we must rely on archaeology to tell us something from which we have to interpolate. Although the remarks below are highly impressionistic, it is to be hoped that at the least they may give a few indications about life for women in ancient Central Asia. General remarks will be based on the rare finds of material culture and on general theories about ancient societies. These remarks will serve as a prelude to the story of the queen of Bukhara.

In prehistoric Central Asia, large quantities of clay “mother goddess” figurines have been found in excavations, some of them crude, but others quite artistic.<sup>1</sup> Not only have figurines been found, but also moulds for their mass production, indicating that their popularity was extensive in Central Asia. The exact importance and meaning of the figurines can only be surmised, but obviously they had religious significance. Whether these figurines were peculiar to Central Asia or similar to objects found elsewhere in the Eurasian world is not germane to the subject of this paper, but presumably the concept of a “mother goddess” was widespread in both paleolithic and neolithic times (see figure 1). Because of this phenomenon, a



*Figure 1: Female Figure from Yalagach, Turkmenistan; Namazga II period. From Central Asia by V.M. Masson and V.I. Sarianidi. Copyright 1972, ©Thames and Hudson Ltd. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.*

simplistic but appealing theory has developed about the nature of the society of prehistoric peoples, which presumably would also apply to our area.<sup>2</sup>

In essence, the theory proposes that society in prehistoric times was primarily matriarchal. The main concern of people then was the quest for freedom from want. In a tribe, clan, or extended family, the chief occupation of the male members was hunting and gathering food so that it could survive. Since men at times lost their lives in hunting, or in accidents, continuity for the family rested with the female members who gave birth to future leaders of the group, and who "held the fort," so to speak, when the men were gone.

With the development of agriculture, in what has been described as a "neolithic revolution," followed by irrigation, which expanded the arable land, hunting and gathering no longer remained the chief source of food for the family, clan, or tribe. Women assumed considerable burdens of care for the fields and for society in general. With more time available for themselves, men turned from hunting game to hunting their fellow men, and the search for freedom from want became a quest for freedom from fear. Quarrels over land and water, and then wars, emerged in Central Asia. No longer are great numbers of female figurines, with stylistic and exaggerated physical

features, to be found in archaeological excavations, but when female figures are portrayed, whether representing a goddess or a mortal woman, they show a woman not as the procreator of the race, or as a mother figure, but rather as an object of beauty. One may assume that at this time the matriarchy changed into a patriarchy. From such meager finds of archaeology, we also may assume a change in the status of women as a result of the coming of patriarchs as defenders of the family, clan, or tribe against enemies, rather than as mere leaders of bands of hunting men seeking to find enough food for all.

Complementing the above remarks is the suggestion that the sequence just mentioned had a parallel in religious development from polytheism to monolatry and finally to monotheism, which ended with "our father who art in heaven," rather than "our mother." Be that as it may, it is apparent that many aspects of society became more and more male-dominated, even though in the realm of religion echoes of the ancient revered position of the mother goddess continued to reverberate, as found in the ancient Elamite religion,<sup>3</sup> in Hinduism and, much later, in the cult of the Virgin Mary in medieval Christendom. We may suspect that a similar process occurred in Central Asia in ancient times. A female feature in various mythologies around the world was the concept of earth as "mother earth," but this raises another fascinating and extensive debate which will not be discussed here.

Admittedly, these views are both speculative and simplistic, but they appear reasonable and not contradictory to any conclusion drawn from the evidence of the figurines, or the apparent development of settled society in Central Asia from the fifth or sixth millenium BC to historic times. For Central Asia, history begins with the Achaemenid Empire in the sixth century BC, even though that history may be described not as a whole cloth with many holes, but rather as fragments of a net which hardly even fit together.<sup>4</sup> Let us turn from these general remarks, however, to more tangible evidence for reconstructing a picture of women in this vast area in ancient times.

It should be mentioned that in ancient Iran, and presumably also in Central Asia, goddesses played an independent role in the hierarchy of deities and not simply as consorts of the gods. The most prominent of the goddesses of the Iranian peoples was Anahita, who not only was a





*Figure 2: The goddess Nanaia or Ardoxsho [Anahita?]. The bottom of a silver bowl, provenance unknown, possibly Sogdian. Courtesy of The British Museum.*

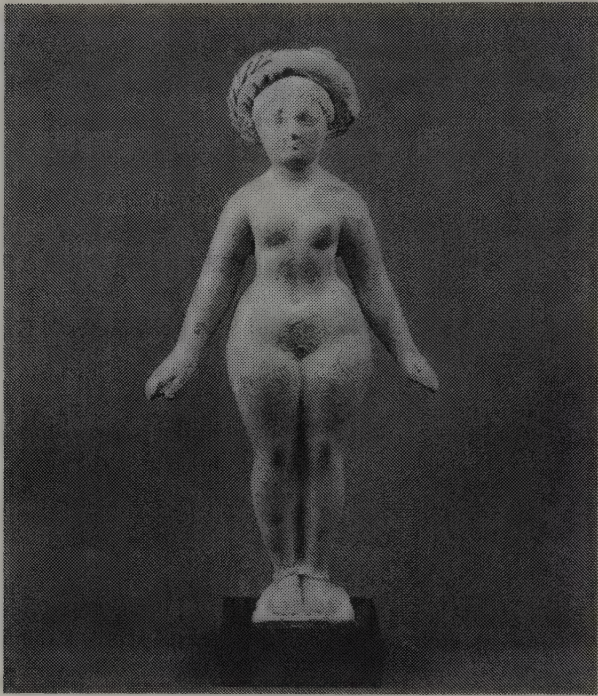
counterpart of Aphrodite in the Classical pantheon, but also seems to have absorbed features of the Semitic or Babylonian Ishtar.<sup>5</sup> Anahita had a Yasht, or chapter, of the Avesta dedicated to her, and in it she is portrayed as beautiful, riding in a chariot, and aggressive in nature. Another female deity mentioned in the Avesta was Ashi, also in a chariot but not as fierce as Anahita (see figure 2).<sup>6</sup> Again, it is not my intention to describe the ancient Iranian female deities, who also prevailed in Central Asia, but merely to indicate a change in the nature of the goddesses, probably the result of the invasion and spread of the Iranians over Central Asia and the plateau which bears their name. Inasmuch as the Indo-Iranians or Aryans were warlike, as we gather from the Rigveda and the Avesta, so their deities assumed a more martial aspect than the deities of the native peoples, such as the Elamites and Mannans on the plateau and the Dravidians in the sub-continent. Furthermore, they may have had to fight harder in conquering their future homelands than other Indo-European speakers in sparsely-populated Europe.

The conquest of Central Asia by Alexander of Macedonia opened the area to Hellenistic influences and contacts which were to provide more information about the history of that part of the world, although our sources are still most meager. Until the coming of the Arabs and Islam, our main sources for the past of Central Asia are the coins of the Bactrian Greeks and their successors.<sup>7</sup> Not only are goddesses shown on some of these coins, but also at times queens, either together with their husbands or as sole rulers. The most noted of the last was a queen called Agathocleia, who probably assumed a sole rule after her husband's death in the second half of the second century BC.

Unfortunately, the identification of most of the Greco-Bactrian rulers is difficult, and the dates of their reigns are unknown and subject to speculation. The majority of the female figures on the coinage, however, were Greek goddesses. Since, however, the Bactrian kingdom at times extended into India, we later find Indian deities portrayed on the coins as well as Greek and Iranian. The Indian goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, as well as Sarasvati, goddess of music, are found on various coins from the northwest of the sub-continent, and presumably the Bactrian Greeks in a process of syncretization honored these local deities even if they did not identify them with their own.

It is interesting that Saka rulers, such as Maues and Azes, who succeeded the Bactrian Greeks, placed the Greek goddesses Niké and Pallas Athena on some of their coins,<sup>8</sup> while the Kushans, who followed them, mostly chose Iranian deities like Nanaia and Ardoxsho whenever they included goddesses on their coinage, although they too did not neglect Greek and Indian deities.<sup>9</sup> What conclusions may one draw from the coinage?

We may suppose that the important position of queens, attested among Hellenistic rulers to the west, also obtained in Central Asia. Likewise, the importance of goddesses in the pantheons of both Greeks and Iranians, as revealed on their coins, was current in Central Asia. Furthermore, after the demise of the Greco-Bactrian kingdoms, their successors seem to have maintained in some fashion this tradition. But what of the common folk? Was the position of women any better under the nomadic successors of the Greco-Bactrians? Under the Sakas, Kushans and other invaders from the north, such as the Hephthalites, with an even worse situation in regard to sources than that for the Greco-Bactrians, we can only guess at an answer



*Figure 3: Fertility Goddess. Early Kusan period, Gandhara, reportedly Charsada, 1st century AD. Terra cotta, H 26.7 cm. ©The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1977.58.*

to this question, based on general observations and on sparse notices in Chinese dynastic histories.

It should be noted that the production of small clay female figurines (see figures 3 and 4) continued down to the Arab invasions of Central Asia in the seventh century. Before that time, however, we find a number of female figurines, each holding a mirror in her hand, and sometimes a goblet instead of a mirror. The mirror goddesses, if they may be so called, seem to have been current in the Kushan period of the first few centuries of our era, and such figures have been found in some quantity especially in the oasis of Merv and elsewhere. Again, the meaning of these figurines is enigmatic and open to speculation, but we may suppose that a religious significance is probable. The Kushans were nomads before they settled in Bactria, and nomads had different concepts of women than did settled folk.



*Figure 4: Kneeling Figure. Afghanistan; 4th–5th century. Stucco with traces of pigment. H 12 1/8 in. (30.8 cm) 1979.4. Courtesy of The Asia Society (New York), Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection. Photography by Lynton Gardiner.*

Inasmuch as nomads led a hardy life, in many ways similar to the prehistoric hunters and gatherers, we may assume that nomadic women were more important in society than their settled sisters. For nomadic women even had to assume leadership in combat if their husbands were killed. It is no wonder that legends about the Amazons related to the Caucasus region, or even to Central Asia, rather than to more settled areas (see figure 5). Even today, nomadic women do not wear veils in Iran and Afghanistan, as do sedentary women in towns and villages, and everywhere they are more independent than the womenfolk of settled regions. They not only assumed positions of leadership and authority, but also in their social position they seem to have had greater freedom than their urban sisters. Several features of society in the centuries before the Arab conquest suggest this.

It is only in ancient Central Asia, presumably among nomads or possibly mountaineers, that we hear of polyandry, whereas everywhere



*Figure 5: Young Woman with a Spear. India, Begram, Kushan period, 1st–2nd centuries. Ivory, 9 x 3.8 cm. ©The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Fund, 1985.106.*

else in the settled realms polygamy reigned. The post-Han dynastic histories of China tell of the practice of polyandry among the Hephthalites. Whether this was widespread or simply restricted to the ruling stratum, as was the practice of binding the heads of male infants to make their skulls elongated and deformed, is unknown. Chinese sources did, however, comment on the important position of women among the barbarians of Central Asia. Just what this meant, however, is not explained. When we remember that Cyrus II, founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, was killed in 530 or 529 BC by the forces of a Saka queen (Tomyris, widow of a chieftain of the Massagetae), we understand that the ability of women to lead men in battle was not the least of the characteristics of elite nomadic woman.<sup>10</sup>



*Figure 6: Horsewomen Riding in the Embassy. Sogdian figures from Afrasiab near Samarkand.*

Lest the impression be conveyed that all women in ancient Central Asia enjoyed an honored and privileged position in society, another side of the coin may be inferred. Girls and young women were bought and sold as slaves more frequently than were males, except perhaps for male prisoners of war after surrender. One small index of the inferior position of women with respect to men is a comparison of the costumes worn by both sexes, as revealed in wall paintings from various pre-Islamic sites in Central Asia. The elaborate textiles used for the clothes of men contrasts starkly with the more simple attire of the presumably upper-class women represented in paintings (see figures 6 through 9).

On the other hand, if we compare the legal position of women in Zoroastrian law with earlier and later practices, there is no doubt



*Figure 7: Sogdian figures from Afrasiab near Samarkand.*

that it was superior to women in later Islamic law, especially regarding inheritance. In such matters, the loosely-organized local Zoroastrianism of Central Asia was similar to the centralized and hieratic Zoroastrian church of Iran. Obviously, however, in both Zoroastrianisms, a concubine would not command either as much respect or as much influence as a chief wife in polygamous societies of Iranian or Central Asian towns. Female children were considered as chattels to be bought and sold rather than as individuals with rights. Only occasionally did an exceptional woman rise to a position of authority. In Central Asia, the most prominent woman in early history was called the *Khātūn* of Bukhara in Arabic sources relating the conquest of Central Asia by the Muslims.<sup>11</sup> The word has been claimed as Turkic in origin, but also as the Sogdian word for queen or lady [wife of a lord].<sup>12</sup>

Tales were related about this woman such that there developed what may be termed a "*Khātūn* legend" attached to the early Islamic raids into the land across the Amu Darya. The great Islamic historian Ṭabarī did not even mention her as a sovereign ruler, only noting that a certain Qabaj *Khātūn* was the wife of the ruler of Bukhara in the year 54/674. In effect, Ṭabarī rejects the story of a ruling queen



*Figure 8: Sogdian figures from Afrasiab near Samarkand.*

of Bukhara at the time of the Arab conquests, and because of the authority of Ṭabarī, modern scholars have tended to dismiss the story of the *Khātūn* as a fabrication. There is no doubt that a legend developed about the *Khātūn* of Bukhara, but the question remains whether there is any truth in the accounts of her, the most detailed of which exists in the Persian translation of an Arabic history of Bukhara by Narshakhī.<sup>13</sup> Let us briefly examine his account.

When a ruler of Bukhara called Bidūn died, his son Ṭughshāda was an infant, so that his mother the *Khātūn* acted as regent and ruler for fifteen years. She ruled wisely, but during her reign the Arabs came to Bukhara. The Arab general, ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād, defeated the forces of the *Khātūn* in 53–54/673–74 and took both tribute and prisoners.<sup>14</sup> The next year, Sa‘īd b. ‘Uthmān led another raid into the oasis of Bukhara and was also successful in obtaining booty and hostages. Several stories are related about the *Khātūn*, about how she became enamoured of Sa‘īd, and about how when he became sick she brought him two old dates as medicine, whereupon he loaded several camels with dates and sent them to her.<sup>15</sup> Another story tells how some nobles of Bukhara were opposed to Ṭughshāda, saying he was not the son of Bidūn but a bastard,





Figure 9: *The Rider at the Embassy's Head. Sogdian figure from Afrasiab near Samarkand.*

whereupon the Khātūn sent them as hostages to Sa'īd who took them to Medina.<sup>16</sup>

Although several scholars have denounced the story of Khātūn's rule as inconsistent with the chronology of the history of Bukhara during the period of the Arab raids, there is no reason to suppose that she and her rule were simple fabrications. First, stories are not invented unless to prove some point, political or otherwise, and the historians Balādhurī and Ya'qūbī, who mention the Khātūn, would have no motive for creating a legend. Second, such a woman hardly would be praised if she had not been capable and wise. Admittedly, Ṭughshāda would have had to have had a long life from the early 670s to the time of the last Umayyad governor of Khurasan, Naṣr b. Sayyār (121/738), but it is not impossible. Olga Smirnova proposes a son of Ṭughshāda with the same name to fill the time-gap, based on coins which are different, but in my opinion this explanation is not necessary.<sup>17</sup> In any case, I see no need to reject the historicity of Khātūn even though some of the details of stories about her may be fabricated or exaggerated.

Perhaps the best tribute to this queen of Central Asia was the remark by Narshakhī that "it was said that in her time there was no

one more capable than she. She governed wisely and the people were obedient to her."<sup>18</sup>

## NOTES

1. On the figurines, see the writings of V.A. Meshkeris, especially her *Koroplastika Sogda* (Dushambe: Donish, 1977). See also V.M. Masson and V.I. Sarianidi, *Central Asia: Turkmenia before the Achaemenids* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1972), plate 9, female figurine from Dashlidjidepe (Namazga I period); plate 10, female figurine from Yalangach-depe (Namazga II period); plates 26–29, female figurines from Kara-depe (Namazga III period); and plate 42, female figurine from Altin-depe (Namazga V period).

2. This theory is particularly associated with the writings of Marija A. Gimbutas. For example, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe, 7000 to 3500 B.C., Myths, Legends and Cult Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); and *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

3. For the feminine element in Elamite religion, see Jack M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995) vol. 2, pp. 1029–30, and vol. 3, pp. 1959–64.

4. For surveys of ancient Central Asia, see David Bivar in *Central Asia*, ed. Gavin Hambly (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), pp. 19–62; and Richard N. Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia: From Antiquity to the Turkish Expansion* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996). For more detailed discussion, see Denis Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, and vols. 1–3 of the *History of Civilizations of Central Asia* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1992–96).

5. See M. Boyce, M.L. Chaumont, and C. Bier, s.v. "Anāhid," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 1003–11. For an example of a terracotta statuette of the goddess, see A. L. Mongait, *Archaeology in the USSR* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961) plate 17a. This statuette was discovered in pre-Islamic Afrasiab (ancient Samarkand), where moulds were also discovered for mass-producing the statuettes. Similar statuettes have been found in nearby Tali-Barzu. See also V.A. Meshkeris, *Terrakoty Samarkandskogo muzeia* (Leningrad: Institut istorii imeni Akhmada Donisha Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR, Gosudarstvennyi Ermitazh, 1962).

6. B. Schlerath and P.O. Skjaervø, s.v. "Aši," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 2, pp. 750–51.

7. W.W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 1951); and A.K. Narain, *The Indo-Greeks* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

8. See John M. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Art of the Kushans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), plates xiv and xv, no. 267, goddess Niké [Maues]; no. 269, goddess Athena [Azes I]; no. 271, goddess Demeter [Azes I]; no. 273, goddess Tyche (?) (Azilises); and no. 280, goddess Athena (?) [Gondophares], and pages 121–37. See also P. Gardner, *Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum: Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India* (London: British Museum, 1886).

9. Rosenfield, pp. 60–103.

10. Herodotus, 1: 105–16. Among celebrated Central Asian women of antiquity were Roxana, daughter of the Bactrian chieftain Oxyartes, whom Alexander the Great married and who bore him his heir, and Apama, daughter of the Sogdian chieftain Spitamenes, whom Seleucus married. These Macedonian marriages with women from the Iranian farther east were probably intended as acts of political reconciliation. See W.W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 326. Celebrated in a rather different way was the queen of Khotan, ‘the desired one,’ who played a part in the surreptitious acquisition by Khotan of silk-worms from China and whom Sir Harold Bailey assumed to be a Saka. Harold W. Bailey, *The Culture of the Sakas in Ancient Iranian Khotan* (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1982), p. 5; but see also M. Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), vol. 1, pp. 229–30, and vol. 2, plate 63.

11. H.A.R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London, 1923; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1970); and R.N. Frye, s.v. “Bukhara,” EI(2), vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960–), pp. 1293–96.

12. I. Gershevitch, *A Grammar of Manichean Sogdian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 18, para. 133, and B. Gharib, *Sogdian Dictionary* (Teheran: Farhang Publications, 1995), p. 440, no. 10825. K. Shiratori, “The Title *Katun*,” *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 1 (1926): 34–39, argues for an East Asian origin. See also R.N. Frye, *The History of Bukhara, Translated from a Persian Abridgement of the Arabic Original by Narshakhi* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1954), n. 38, pp. 110–11. [Hereafter, *Narshakhī*].

13. See Frye, above.

14. *Narshakhī*, pp. 9–10 and 37–38.

15. *Narshakhī*, pp. 38–40.

16. *Narshakhī*, p. 39.

17. O.I. Smirnova, *Ocherki iz istorii Sogda* (Moscow: Akademiya nauk SSSR. Institut vostokovedeniya, 1970), p. 279, where the Arabic, Chinese, and Sogdian sources are correlated.

18. *Narshakhī*, p. 9.

ZAYNAB BINT 'ALI  
AND THE PLACE OF THE WOMEN  
OF THE HOUSEHOLDS OF THE FIRST  
IMĀMS IN SHĪ'ITE DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE

*David Pinault*

*This chapter analyzes portraits of Zaynab and other women from Shī'ite sacred history in sources ranging from medieval devotional literature to contemporary lamentation-poetry recited in annual Muḥarram rituals.*

Shī'ite devotional literature of both the medieval and modern eras shows particular reverence for a number of women belonging to the family of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Shī'ite Imāms. All these women are associated in one way or another with the occurrence perceived by Shī'ites as pivotal in world history: the death of the Imām Ḥusayn, grandson of the Prophet, at the battle of Karbala (which took place in the year 680 AD). Appreciation of the devotional portrait of the women of *ahl al-bayt* [the Prophet's family and his descendants] requires some familiarity with the seventh-century conflicts that culminated at Karbala.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE STRUGGLE FOR THE CALIPHATE

Left unsettled at the death of Muḥammad in 632 was the question of succession to leadership of the Islamic community: to whom should power devolve, and how should a ruler's qualifications be determined? One party favored the process of election by a circle of councillors and community leaders; the other espoused the cause of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, cousin of the Prophet, who had married the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima. The latter group referred to themselves as *shī'at 'Alī* ['Alid partisans/supporters of 'Alī'] or simply as *al-shī'a*. They maintained that the Prophet himself, guided by divine

inspiration, had designated 'Alī as his successor; moreover, 'Alī's ties by marriage and blood bound him more closely than anyone else to the family of Muḥammad. Despite his qualifications, 'Alī was blocked repeatedly from power: first the Prophet's companion Abū Bakr, then 'Umar, then 'Uthmān became caliph. 'Alī did not contest their election, apparently out of a desire to avoid civil war. Finally, he did obtain the caliphate and ruled for some five years, only to be murdered in 661. His wife Fāṭima predeceased him: so devoted was she to her father that she died of grief within a few months of the Prophet's death. During this final period of her life, according to Shī'ite sources, Fāṭima had been abused by 'Alī's rivals: Abū Bakr prevented her from inheriting property bequeathed her by the Prophet; 'Umar, in a confrontation at 'Alī's home over the right to the caliphate, suddenly shoved open the door of the house, thereby striking Fāṭima and breaking several of her ribs.<sup>1</sup>

Upon 'Alī's death the caliphate passed to Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, governor of Damascus and Syria. Mu'āwiya was a Qurayshī [a member of the Prophet Muḥammad's tribe] but also belonged to the wealthy Umayyad clan, notorious for its late conversion to Islam and its obstinate hostility to Muḥammad in the early days before the Prophet's final success in Mecca.

The Shī'ites' hopes had focused on Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, the two sons of 'Alī and Fāṭima. At stake was a growing Islamic empire that had already conquered much of the Near East, North Africa, and Iran. Mu'āwiya coerced the elder son, Ḥasan, into yielding him the caliphate; Ḥasan was then forced into a pensioned retirement in Medina (where, according to Shī'ite sources, he was subsequently poisoned at the caliph's order). Although he was deprived of the caliphate, Ḥasan is nevertheless revered today as the second Imām (the first was 'Alī). In Shī'ism the term Imām indicates those members of *ahl al-bayt* who are the true spiritual leaders of the Muslim community, regardless of any political recognition or lack thereof extended by the Muslim world at large.

In the year 680, Mu'āwiya died and was succeeded by his son Yazīd. The latter is reviled today as a tyrant who felt no shame at making a public display of his drinking and immoral lifestyle. At Mu'āwiya's death, 'Alid partisans in the Iraqī city of Kufa, long a Shī'ite stronghold, sent messengers to Mecca to 'Alī's surviving son, Ḥusayn, urging him to come to Kufa, lead a Shī'ite revolt against

Yazīd, and claim the caliphate that was rightfully his by virtue of descent from the Prophet. Ḥusayn accepted the call and set out from Mecca with only a small band of followers, including his personal bodyguard and the women and children of his household.

But 'Alī's son never made it to Kufa. At Karbala, near the River Euphrates, southwest of what is today Baghdad, he was intercepted and surrounded by forces loyal to Yazīd. Meanwhile, the Umayyad governor of Kufa had quelled the incipient rebellion there and by intimidation had prevented any Shī'ite attempts to rescue their leader at Karbala. From the second to the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram the Imām Ḥusayn and his followers withstood siege by Yazīd's army, which hoped to force the small band to surrender. Ḥusayn chose death instead. Throughout the siege the defenders suffered from hunger and thirst. Anguished by the cries of Ḥusayn's children, Abū al-Faḍl al-'Abbās, half-brother and personal attendant of the Imām, galloped to the Euphrates in an attempt to bring water. He perished in so doing, dying in his brother's arms. Shortly thereafter, on 'Āshūrā', the tenth of Muḥarram, Ḥusayn's camp was overrun by the enemy. Ḥusayn himself was killed, his household taken captive. The train of prisoners, including Ḥusayn's sisters Zaynab and Umm Kulthūm, was marched through the desert to Damascus. Here Yazīd is said to have gloated over the severed head of his rival, which had been brought from the battlefield for the caliph to dishonor with blows from a cane. Here too, within the very palace of Yazīd, Zaynab held the first *majlis*, or lamentation assembly, to mourn for her brother. During this period of imprisonment Ḥusayn's four-year-old daughter Sakīna died. Finally Yazīd released the survivors; they returned to Arabia by way of Karbala, where they halted to lament Ḥusayn's death once more.

The ninth-century historian al-Ṭabarī, in his description of the battle, records traditions to the effect that Ḥusayn hesitated at one point in his journey towards Kufa, when he learned of the opposition awaiting him and the unlikelihood of political success for his proposed uprising; only at the urging of certain of his followers did Ḥusayn proceed.<sup>2</sup> But such views are denied by Shī'ite interpreters of Karbala, who insist that Ḥusayn had foreknowledge of his own defeat and violent death and voluntarily chose to embrace martyrdom at Karbala. This martyrdom was necessary in order to awaken Muslims to an awareness of the moral threat to the entire

Islamic community constituted by Yazīd's tyrannous reign. In the Shī'ite view Ḥusayn deliberately brought the women and children of his household with him to Karbala so as to increase the shock felt by the Islamic community upon learning of their humiliation and captivity and thereby heighten public aversion to Yazīd.<sup>3</sup>

But in addition to the Muslim community as a whole, Ḥusayn's sacrifice is held by devout Shī'ites to benefit believing individuals. In exchange for the suffering voluntarily undergone by Ḥusayn and the Karbala martyrs, God has granted them *shafā'a* [the power of intercession]. This power is also granted to Fāṭima, who even while in Paradise experienced agonies of grief for Ḥusayn and is believed to descend to earth to be spiritually present at every *majlis* held for her son. Ḥusayn and Fāṭima will exercise *shafā'a* on behalf of anyone who remembers the Karbala martyrs and honors them during the month of Muḥarram. I will return to the question of intercession when discussing present-day Shī'ite liturgical practices and twentieth-century reinterpretations of the "Women of Karbala."<sup>4</sup>

#### FĀṬIMA AL-ZAHRĀ': ETERNAL SORROW, CELESTIAL LIGHT

The qualities associated with the Prophet's daughter in the medieval period can be discerned in the *Mafātīḥ al-jinān* [The Keys to the Gardens of Paradise], a popular devotional anthology compiled by the modern-day Iranian author 'Abbās Qummī (d. 1941). The compilation is recent, but Shī'ite scholarship assigns at least some of the prayers in Qummī's collection to the tenth and eleventh centuries AD, while other hymns and invocations from the anthology are ascribed to members of the Prophet's family in the seventh century.<sup>5</sup> Following are excerpts from the *Mafātīḥ* of prayers meant to be addressed to Fāṭima al-Zahrā' [al-Zahrā, the radiant, is one of the most common honorific titles associated with the Prophet's daughter]:

Peace be with you, O you who were afflicted with trials by the One who created you. When He tested you, He found you to be patient under affliction....

Peace be with you, O mistress of the women of the worlds. Peace be with you, O mother of the vindicators of humankind in argument. Peace be with you, O you who were wronged, you who were deprived of that to which you were entitled by right....

God's blessings on the immaculate virgin, the truthful, the sinless, the pious, the unstained; the one who is pleasing to God and

acceptable, the guiltless, the rightly guided, the one who was wronged; the one who was unjustly overpowered and dispossessed by force of that to which she was entitled; the one kept from her lawful inheritance, she whose ribs were broken; whose husband was wronged, whose son was slain; Fāṭima, daughter of your Prophet, O God, flesh of his flesh, innermost heart of his heart.... Mistress of women, proclaimer of God's friends, ally of piety and asceticism, apple of Paradise and eternity.... You, O God, drew forth from her the light of the Imāms.<sup>6</sup>

The litanies recorded by Qummī bestow on Fāṭima the title *ṣayyidat nisā' al-'ālamīn*: 'mistress of the women of the worlds.' The title suggests her status as exemplar and role-model for Shī'ite women; the citations quoted above offer some indication of the virtues she is held to exemplify: the *Mafāṭīḥ* catalogues the injustices visited on Fāṭima, emphasizing her status as guiltless victim and her patience in suffering. Rather than describe her as an agent, a doer, these passages characterize Fāṭima in terms of passivity: she endured injustice, withstood the test of affliction, served as the source from which God drew forth the light of her descendants the Imāms. What emerges is a portrait of innocence wronged: a devotional parallel, it could be argued, to the political quietism favored by the Shī'ite community as a whole throughout most of Islamic history.

Thus it seems that the medieval Shī'ite sources portray Fāṭima al-Zahrā' as an archetype of the sorrowing mother. But these same sources are careful to note that God rewarded her for what she endured. Following is an excerpt from the writings of al-Kulaynī, a tenth-century legal authority and compiler of one of the most celebrated collections of Shī'ite *ḥadīth*-literature:

Fāṭima survived seventy-five days after God's prophet, during which time a great sorrow for her father entered her. So the angel Gabriel came to her and was able to console her for her father's death. He healed her soul and gave her knowledge concerning her father and his station and rank. And Gabriel also gave her knowledge concerning what would happen after her time to her descendants. And 'Alī wrote all this down. And this comprises 'the Book of Fāṭima,' peace be upon her.<sup>7</sup>

Note how this passage heightens Fāṭima's dignity and rank: first it credits her with the gift of divine foreknowledge; then it characterizes Gabriel's communication to her as *muṣḥaf Fāṭima*, 'the Book of Fāṭima,' a term reminiscent of the phrase *ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm wa-Mūsā*



[the books of Abraham and Moses] from Qur'ān 87.19 (cf. also Qur'ān 53.36-37). Not that Kulaynī is venturing so far as to assign the "Book of Fāṭima" scriptural status on a par with the Qur'ān; to do so would amount to impiety. Yet in a text-oriented tradition such as Islam, the linking of Fāṭima's name with angelic revelation, together with the assertion that this revelation was recorded in book-form, constitutes a very high form of praise. The implied parallel with her father's experience is also remarkable: Muḥammad was visited by Gabriel, and the Prophet's companions wrote down what was revealed; Fāṭima, too, was visited by the angel, and her husband served as recording scribe.

Kulaynī also refers to Fāṭima in his scriptural exegesis of Qur'ān 24.35, the well-known 'light verse' which begins: "God is the light of the heavens and of the earth. His light may be likened to a lamp-niche; within it is a lamp. The lamp is within a glass. The glass is like unto a glittering star, which is enkindled from a blessed tree, neither of the east nor of the west. Its oil gives light almost of itself, even if untouched by fire. Light upon light." Kulaynī comments on the passage as follows:

Concerning God's word, may He be exalted, 'God is the light of the heavens and of the earth. His light may be likened to a lamp-niche,' Abū 'Abd Allāh [i.e., the Imām Ḥusayn], peace be upon him, said the following: Fāṭima, peace be upon her: 'Within her is a lamp.' Ḥasan is 'the lamp within a glass.' Ḥusayn is 'the glass, like unto a glittering star.' Fāṭima is a 'glittering star' among the women of the people of the lower world, a star that 'is enkindled from a blessed tree.' Abraham, upon him be peace, is 'an olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west,' neither Jewish nor Christian. 'Its oil gives light almost of itself: Knowledge virtually bursts forth by means of it. 'Even if untouched by fire. Light upon light': that is, one Imām after another proceeds therefrom.<sup>8</sup>

In both the medieval and modern eras light-imagery has long been popular in mystical Islam as a way of describing one's intimate direct experience of the Divine.<sup>9</sup> In accordance with the *Shī'ite* tradition of viewing the Imāms as the believer's means of access to God, Kulaynī here takes the Qur'ānic vocabulary of radiance and applies it to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and their descendants. In this exegesis the lamp-niche is allegorized as Fāṭima, within whom repose her sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, "the lamp" and "the glass." In this womb-metaphor she is described as the birthplace and source of the light

of the Imāms. Kulaynī takes his exegesis further, describing Fāṭima as a celestial being, foremost of the women of this lower world, linked in a kind of mystical genealogy with her spiritual forefather Abraham: starfire kindled from olivewood. Fāṭima the Radiant, conveyer of illumination to her future offspring, unites celestial hierarchies, light upon light, with their earth-origins from the Abrahamic past.

Fāṭima's key role as both daughter of the Prophet and mother of the Imāms led to Shī'ite meditations on what Louis Massignon calls the "five-fold personhood of Fāṭima." He cites a medieval Shī'ite text in which the first humans created by God ask Him for a vision of Paradise:

He showed them a Being, adorned with a myriad of glittering lights of various colors, who sat on a throne, a crown on her head, rings in her ears, a drawn sword by her side. The radiance streaming forth from her illumined the whole garden. When the first humans asked, 'Who is this?', the following answer was given to them: 'This is the form of Fāṭima, as she appears in Paradise. Her crown is Muḥammad; her earrings are Ḥasan and Ḥusayn; her sword is "‘Alī."'10

#### FĀṬIMA KUBRĀ AND SAKĪNA BINT ḤUSAYN:

##### DRAMATIC PATHOS AND THE SUFFERING OF THE MARTYRS

Of the many personages associated with Karbala, the ones who figure most prominently in Shī'ite devotional literature are those whose stories are linked with scenes of pathos. Later, I will discuss the role of pathetic evocation and commemorative liturgy in Shī'ite soteriology; for the moment I will simply introduce two of Ḥusayn's daughters, Fāṭima Kubrā and Sakīna, who, precisely because they are believed to have suffered so much, recur frequently in religious narratives of Karbala.

For the story of Fāṭima Kubrā, I rely on the Persian-language *Rawḍat al-shuhadā'* [The Garden of the Martyrs] authored by Ḥusayn Wā'iz al-Kāshifī (d. 910/1504). Kāshifī's detailed and vividly imagined descriptions of the Karbala martyrs' torments have been used for centuries in Shī'ite Muḥarrām gatherings. Especially in the Ṣafavid era, during the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, "it became popular," notes the scholar Moojan Momen, "to organise meetings at which this book was recited to the accompaniment of much weeping and wailing. These meetings became known as *rawḍa-*

*khānī* [recital of the *Rawḍa al-Shuhadāʾ*] and the reciters became known as *Rawḍa-khāns*, who soon became a profession in their own right.<sup>11</sup> Kāshifī's literary style is typical of the genre of storytelling in an oral-performance setting for public entertainment in Middle Eastern and North African societies of the pre-modern era: the narrative is presented in prose-format interspersed with brief citations of poetry. The poetic verses act as a commentary on the prose-action, usually providing an emotional response to some dramatic confrontation or act of violence that has just been presented in the prose portion of the text.<sup>12</sup>

Reference to Fāṭima Kubrā appears in Kāshifī's description of the battlefield death of her fiancé, Qāsim ibn Ḥasan, son of the second Imām. Both Fāṭima and Qāsim are young, of beautiful appearance (this is part of the tragedy of their fate); both have traveled in Ḥusayn's entourage to Karbala. Shortly before the final defeat, Kāshifī tells us, Qāsim begs his uncle to let him go forth to fight; but Ḥusayn, along with Qāsim's mother (also present at Karbala), refuses the boy permission. At a loss what to do, Qāsim withdraws to his tent. Thereupon he remembers an amulet he is wearing, bound to his upper arm, given him years before by his father. Open it, Ḥasan had instructed him long ago, only in a moment of great sorrow and distress. Now is that time, Qāsim decides, and he opens the amulet, to find a message in his father's handwriting:

Qāsim, I leave you this legacy and command, that when you see my brother Ḥusayn in the desert of Karbala, in the hands of treacherous Syrians and faithless Kufans, then exert yourself on the battlefield. Offer yourself as a ransom for Ḥusayn. This is the key to the gate of martyrdom and the means of attaining heavenly acceptance and happiness.<sup>13</sup>

Racing from the tent, Qāsim shows his father's bequest to Ḥusayn. The Imām now yields to Qāsim's wish but reminds him that he, too, has a command to fulfill from Ḥasan: that the families of the two Imāms be further united through first-cousin marriage. Ḥusayn then takes his nephew to Fāṭima Kubrā's tent and orders Qāsim's mother to dress the boy in his father's clothes. "With his own sacred hands," Kāshifī says, Ḥusayn fastens a beautiful turban atop Qāsim's head. Thereafter, the text continues:

He performed the wedding and joined the girl to Qāsim in marriage and gave her hand to him and then left the tent.

His hand in hers, Qāsim was gazing at her; when suddenly a cry came from the army of 'Umar Sa'd [commander of the enemy forces]: 'No other champions remain!'

Qāsim released his bride's hand and started to leave the tent. She seized the skirt of his garment and said, 'Qāsim, what are you thinking? Where do you intend to go?'

Qāsim replied, 'O light of my eyes, you know what I intend to do. I intend to try to ward off the enemy. Release the skirt of my garment. For our wedding-feast will take place on the Day of Resurrection.'<sup>14</sup>

Fāṭima Kubrā obeys; but the young woman's affection, her fear, her desire not to lose her husband, all are conveyed implicitly by the words Kāshifī has her speak in response:

'Qāsim, you say that our wedding will take place at the Resurrection. But on the Day of Resurrection where shall I seek you? By what sign shall I know you?'

He replied, 'Seek me in the company of my father and grandfather. By this torn sleeve shall you know me.' Then he raised his hand and tore his sleeve.<sup>15</sup>

Thereafter, amid the wailing outcries of the attendant women, Qāsim leaves the tent to be killed in battle; and Fāṭima Kubrā is left to face humiliation and imprisonment. Kāshifī's chapter on Qāsim and Fāṭima closes with the young bride lamenting her husband's death in verse.

The emotional force in the Qāsim-Fāṭima episode is generated by Kāshifī's juxtaposing of tragic antitheses: love/warfare, wedding/sudden death, celebration/lamentation, union/loss. Latter-day observers have questioned the historicity of this account, doubting whether this battlefield marriage ever took place.<sup>16</sup> Earlier sources, too, are significantly silent on this issue. For example, the tenth-century Shī'ite authority Shaykh al-Mufid, in his biography of the Imāms, entitled *Kitāb al-irshād*, describes in detail the battlefield death of Qāsim but says nothing of his marriage to Ḥusayn's daughter.<sup>17</sup> No matter. Shī'ite communities throughout the world annually reserve the seventh of Muḥarram to commemorate *nawshay-i Karbalā'* [the bridegroom of Karbala] and the marriage of Qāsim and Fāṭima Kubrā. The hymns recited on that day, together with the processions held in honor of the Karbala wedding, capitalize on the same pathetic qualities as does Kāshifī's narrative, and with the same purpose: to evoke a tearful emotional response in *majlis*-congregations.<sup>18</sup>

The portrait of Fāṭima Kubrā that emerges from Kāshifī's account is one that emphasizes her fear, lamentation, and distress—epitomized in a single gesture as she clutches at her husband's clothes in an effort to prevent his death. By drawing our attention to the gesture, Kāshifī contrasts the husband's resolve with Fāṭima's anguish; the emotional tension between the two characters heightens the sense of pathos for the audience hearing the story. Fāṭima Kubrā's younger sister Sakīna, who was also present at Karbala, is likewise portrayed in Shī'ite devotional texts in such a way as to evoke the pathos surrounding her fate: barely four years old at the time of the battle, she suffered terribly from thirst during the siege and eventually died in captivity in Damascus. I will give further attention to the depiction of Sakīna's sufferings when I discuss the genre of the *nawḥa* in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Shī'ite lamentation-poetry; here I wish to consider the very distinctive way in which the figure of Sakīna is employed in an Arabic-language Shī'ite *ḥadīth*-collection entitled *Bihār al-anwār* [The Oceans of Illumination], authored by the Iranian jurisconsult Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1111/1699–1700). Majlisī used his scholarship to define Shī'ism over against the Sunnī form of Islam; there is a didactic orientation to his presentation of many of the *ḥadīths* contained in the *Bihār*, whereby he narrates incidents from Karbala so as to articulate Shī'ite theological doctrine. Consider the following account, in which Majlisī reports that Ḥusayn's young daughter Sakīna, held captive at Yazīd's court, has a dream in which she sees the gates of heaven open. She enters Paradise and finds a palace in a garden; standing about is a multitude of the heavenly 'servants of Paradise.' Thereupon one of the attendants approaches:

The servant then took me by the hand [Majlisī has Sakīna report] and led me into the palace. Within were five women whose appearance had been glorified by God and whose forms were radiant with divine light. In their midst was one woman in particular of wondrous appearance: her hair was disheveled; she was dressed in black garments; in her hand was a tunic stained with blood. Whenever she stood up, the other women stood with her; when she sat, so did they. I said to the servant, 'Who are these women whose appearance God has glorified?' He replied, 'Sakīna, this person here is Eve, mother of humankind; and this is Mary bint 'Imrān [the mother of Jesus]; and this is Khadīja bint Khuwaylid [the Prophet Muḥammad's first wife]; and this is Hagar; and this is Sarah. And this woman here, in

whose hand is the bloodstained shirt, who whenever she stands, the others stand with her, and whenever she sits, so do the others: why, this is your grandmother, Fāṭima the Radiant.'

So I drew near and said to her, 'Grandmother! By God, my father has been killed; and even though I'm so young, I've been left an orphan.' Then she hugged me to her breast and wept bitterly. All the women wept with her and said to her, 'Fāṭima, may God judge between you and Yazīd on Judgment Day!'<sup>19</sup>

Majlisī presents Sakīna's dream in such a way as to develop both doctrinal and liturgical themes. First, this gathering of pre-eminent figures from the whole range of sacred history, representing all the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism (Sarah), Christianity (Mary), and Islam (Hagar and Khadija)—heightens the importance of Karbala, lending it a cosmic dimension: all of human history comes to a focus in Ḥusayn's death, a death that saved the Islamic community; every venerable ancestor of the Muslim community, from Eve to Khadija, finds this event worthy of contemplation. Second, the attentiveness and respect displayed by the other figures in this assembly illustrate the honorific title ascribed to Fāṭima in Qummi's prayer-anthology: 'Mistress of the women of the worlds.' Finally, Sakīna's dream may be said to offer us a glimpse of a Shī'ite women's Muḥarram *majlis* as imagined by a seventeenth-century *mullā*: a gathering characterized by hierarchy and deference among the celebrants, a gathering where appropriate modes of deportment, dress, and ritual wailing are clearly indicated. The behavior shown forth in Sakīna's vision can be described as prescriptive, exemplary: these holy women in their gathering model the correct way of holding a *majlis*.

Sakīna's dream is one example of mythic narratives from the Shī'ite tradition that in story-form convey the importance of women's roles in Muḥarram liturgies. The following legend is from Kāshifī's *Garden of the Martyrs*:

They say that two days later [i.e., two days after the slaughter of the Karbala martyrs] 'Umar Sa'd's army left, taking away the severed heads of the martyrs, abandoning their headless corpses in the desert of Karbala. News of this reached the people of Ghādiriyya and they came and beheld the headless corpses lying there. Then they heard the sound of lamentation and mourning, but they could see no one. This was a gathering of the jinn, who performed lamentation-verses [literally, 'did *nawḥas*'] and recited poems as a form of elegy for them [Persian: *nawḥa mī-kardand wa-qaṣā'id dar marthiyya-ye īshān mī-*

*khwāndand*]. Among these poems is the following verse [given in Arabic in Kāshifi's text]:

The women of the jinn help the women of the Hashemites,  
the daughters of the Chosen One,  
Muḥammad, foremost of all created beings.

That is [here Kāshifi offers a Persian paraphrase], the women of the fairies [or *peris*] have engaged in funeral-laments and weeping [Persian: *mātam wa-nawḥa-garī*] in solidarity with the women of the Hashemites.<sup>20</sup>

The wording chosen by Kāshifi to describe the genies' mourning corresponds precisely to the specifically liturgical vocabulary of the Muḥarram *majlis*: *qaṣā'id dār marthiyya*, *mātam wa-nawḥa-garī*. Note, too, the paradigmatic quality of this myth: if the female jinn and invisible *peris* of the spirit-world mourned Ḥusayn through the recitation of poetry, so, too, should the women of the human race.

#### SHĀHRBĀNŪ AND THE UNION OF THE 'TWO TREASURES'

Shāhrbānū is cited far less frequently in Shī'ite devotional literature than the women discussed above; yet she plays an important role in sacred history, for through her arose what may be termed a 'Persianizing' of the line of the Imāms. Daughter of Yazdigird III (who was the last of the pre-Islamic Sassanid *shāhs* of Iran), she is said in Kulaynī's tenth-century account to have been captured by the Islamic armies and brought to Medina at the time of Persia's conquest by the Arabs. The first Imām, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, rescued her from abuse at the hands of the caliph 'Umar and kept her from being sold into slavery, arranging instead for the captive princess to be married to his son Ḥusayn.<sup>21</sup>

Shāhrbānū's acquiescence to this marriage with a member of an enemy people is explained by Majlisī as being based on a series of miraculous visions. Majlisī ascribes to Shāhrbānū the following speech:

Before the Muslim army arrived, I dreamed that Muḥammad, God's messenger, entered our house and sat with Ḥusayn and proposed to me on Ḥusayn's behalf and married me to him. When morning came this matter stirred my heart and I could think of nothing else. The next night I saw Fāṭima, Muḥammad's daughter, who came to me and introduced me to Islam. So I became Muslim, and then she said: 'Victory will go to the Muslims, and soon you will come unhurt to my son Ḥusayn. No one will harm you.'<sup>22</sup>

Again, as in the story of Karbala, Shī'ite piety imagines Fāṭima al-Zahrā' to be spiritually present and actively involved in human affairs long after her death.

According to Shī'ite tradition, Shāhrbānū and Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī were the parents of the fourth Imām, 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn. Kulaynī states that one of Zayn al-'Ābidīn's honorific titles was *Ibn al-Khayratayn*, 'Son of the Two Treasures,' and Kulaynī goes on to explain: "For God's treasure among the Arabs is the Hashemite clan [the family of the Prophet Muḥammad and his descendants], and from among the non-Arabs, the people of Persia."<sup>23</sup> Ithnā-Asharī or 'Twelver' Shī'ites [adherents of the majoritarian form of Shī'ism, prevalent in Iran] believe that all the Imāms beginning with Zayn al-'Ābidīn are descended from Shāhrbānū and Ḥusayn; their union constituted a linking of the ancient Iranian monarchy with the Arab household of the Prophet. It should be noted, however, that the historicity of the above account is very much open to question; scholar Yann Richard describes Shāhrbānū's marriage as a "pious legend," adding this comment:

Iranian traditions have profitably tapped this rich vein that establishes such a strong link between the humiliated family of the Imams and a nation that was swift to embrace Islam. There is no source that can truly confirm or deny this story, which gives rise to reservations on the part of modern revolutionary Islamists: having fought against the old regime, they reject this aristocratic harnessing of Shī'ism and the old connivance between the imperial system and a certain type of religion.<sup>24</sup>

That is to say, latter-day opponents of Muḥammad Riḍā Shāh Pahlavi (d. 1980) are suspicious of any tale that lends religious legitimacy to the newly-toppled Iranian monarchy.

But the dubious historicity surrounding Shāhrbānū has not prevented her from having a role in the events of Karbala. Shaykh al-Mufid, the tenth-century biographer of the Imāms, mentions Shāhrbānū in passing, stating that she was the mother of Zayn al-'Ābidīn; but he says nothing about her having accompanied Ḥusayn from Arabia on his last fateful journey.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless Shī'ite legend imagines her as present at the battle. In an Iranian 'passion play' noted by Michael Fischer, Shāhrbānū is described as evading capture by Yazid's army: Ḥusayn's horse, Dhū al-Janāh [the Winged One], spirits her away from Karbala and brings her safely to Iran, to the



city of Ray.<sup>26</sup> Henry Corbin notes the existence of a present-day “sanctuary of *Shāhrbānū*” near Ray south of Tehran; Fischer notes that access to this shrine is reserved for women only.<sup>27</sup>

#### ZAYNAB AND UMM KULTHŪM: PORTRAITS OF RESISTANCE

Zaynab bint ‘Alī and Umm Kulthūm, both of them sisters of the Imām Ḥusayn, were present at Karbala and survived the battle, thereafter being led as captives to Yazīd’s court in Damascus. Majlisī depicts both sisters as outspoken in confronting their oppressors. Immediately after the battle, Yazīd’s soldiers had taken the surviving members of Ḥusayn’s family to the Umayyad garrison of Kufa before the journey to Damascus. As the camel-borne captives were paraded through the streets of Kufa, crowds gathered and many individuals tried to offer bread and dates to the children among the prisoners. This sympathetic gesture was prompted in all probability by shame as well as pity: for the Kufans, after first inviting Ḥusayn to leave Arabia and lead them in rebellion, had failed to revolt against Yazīd or join Ḥusayn at Karbala; the Umayyad governor of Kufa, ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād, had been ferocious in crushing every incipient attempt at insurgency. Umm Kulthūm responded angrily to the Kufans’ shame-faced attempts at generosity. She cried out that these people had no right to offer charity to the survivors; and then, Majlisī tells us, “she snatched it [the bread and dates] from the hands and very mouths of the children and threw it to the ground. And all this happened while the crowds were weeping and wailing.” Once they had arrived in Damascus, the women were assembled before Yazīd in his court; there, Qāsim’s widow, Fāṭima Kubrā, the beautiful young Bride of Karbala, excited the lust of a “red-haired Syrian” from among the caliph’s entourage. Loudly the Syrian demanded that she be given to him as a gift. The young woman is described as shrinking back with fear, but Umm Kulthūm blasted the man with scorn: “Shut up, most depraved of men. May God cut out your tongue!...The children of the prophets aren’t meant to be the slaves of the children of bastards and pretenders.”<sup>28</sup>

Yet in the devotional literature and lamentation-hymns citations of Umm Kulthūm are relatively few compared with the numerous references to her much more celebrated sister Zaynab. From a functional perspective Umm Kulthūm duplicates Zaynab’s role as a symbol of defiance in defeat; the role and its attendant actions tend to be focused in the person of Zaynab. A good example of this tendency at work is a recent popular-format biography of Zaynab by M.H. Bilgrami. Here

the Fāṭima Kubrā-Syrian episode includes no reference to Umm Kulthūm; Zaynab is the person who speaks out in defense of the young widow, and when she curses the Syrian he drops dead. Bilgrami also assigns to Zaynab a six-page-long speech of defiance against Yazīd.<sup>29</sup>

Zaynab's prominence is also due to the fact that Shī'ite piety credits her with being the first to hold a *majlis* or lamentation-assembly to mourn Ḥusayn. This she did while still a prisoner in Damascus. Even more important is her rescue of 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn, the only son of Ḥusayn to survive Karbala. Too ill to take part in the fighting, Zayn al-'Ābidīn had lain helplessly in his tent throughout the battle. He had been brought along with the other prisoners to Kufa, where the governor Ibn Ziyād ordered him to be put to death. No sooner was this command uttered, we learn from Majlisī, than Zaynab rushed to her nephew's side and clasped him in a protective embrace. "By God, I won't let go of him," she exclaimed. "If you're going to kill him, you'll have to kill me along with him." Her action ensured not only Zayn al-'Ābidīn's safety but also the survival of the line of the Imāms in human history.<sup>30</sup>

Male helplessness among the survivors of Karbala led to role reversals and unexpected inversions of traditional gender-linked behavior. This in turn has generated a certain tension surrounding the figure of Zaynab in recent Shī'ite devotional and political writings that evaluate her actions of defiance. I will discuss this in more detail below.

#### REPRESENTATIONS OF THE WOMEN OF KARBALA IN *NAWḤA* LAMENTATION-POETRY

For centuries one of the most popular forms of Shī'ite devotional literature has been the *nawḥa* or lamentation-dirge. The *nawḥa* is brief in length, typically comprising no more than a dozen verses; it takes as its subject matter the martyrs' sufferings at Karbala. My first example of this genre is taken from the works of Mīr Bābur 'Alī Anīs, the celebrated Urdu poet who died in 1874 at Lucknow. The opening verse of this particular *nawḥa* refers to the *Chahalom* [which I translate with the phrase 'fortieth-day lamentation-ceremony']. Universally in Islamic societies the term designates prayer-services held forty days after a person's death; but in Shī'ite Islam it also refers to the liturgy of mourning held in honor of Ḥusayn forty days after 'Āshūrā'. The *Chahalom* marks the close of the annual lamentation-season. I translate as follows the poem's first five verses:

Today is the fortieth-day lamentation-ceremony,  
at the burial site of the exalted lord;

Bareheaded is the Prophet, upon him be peace.

The people of the Household have been released from  
prison and have come to the battlefield  
to lift up the corpse of the grandson of the Prophet  
of all humankind.

They are ready for the burial of the pure martyrs;  
the graves are ready for each of the renowned ones.

The servant Fiḍḍa cried out, 'O Lady, come and take part;  
Sajjād [a title of 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn] is burying  
the Imām's corpse.'

'Would that you could bury me, too, beside my brother!':  
these were the words uttered by the joyless Zaynab.'

In this poem Anīs describes the return to Karbala of the survivors after their release from imprisonment in Damascus. Zayn al-'Ābidīn and the women of Ḥusayn's household are depicted as undertaking the interment of the unburied corpses (this portrayal conflicts with the account in Ṭabarī's history, which credits the sympathetic inhabitants of Ghādiriyya with burying the martyrs the day after 'Āshūrā'; but Anīs's burial-scene carries more emotional charge than Ṭabarī's).<sup>32</sup> There is a stillness to the scene as visualized by Anīs, a quality akin to the *depositio*-tableaux in Christian representations of the Crucifixion and Mary's contemplation of the body of Jesus. Such verses illustrate a recurrent characteristic of the *nawḥa*-genre: it is lyric rather than narrative in emphasis, preferring the evocation of intense emotion to the presentation of sequential actions. But we should bear in mind that this evocation of emotion is not intended simply as an aesthetic experience: the *nawḥa* comprises functional religious art, which is intended to arouse an expression of pity and compassion in its audience in the form of weeping and exclamations of grief. The *nawḥa* is intended primarily to be experienced collectively, most typically in the setting of a Muḥarram-gathering, rather than in the solitary act of private reading. Weeping out of sympathy with the Karbala martyrs earns one the benefit of intercession in the afterlife, a doctrine reflected in the following passage from an Iranian 'passion play,' where the Prophet Muḥammad hands to his grandson Ḥusayn the keys of Paradise:

Go thou and deliver from the flames every one who has in his life-  
time shed but a single tear for thee, every one who has in any way

helped thee, every one who has performed a pilgrimage to thy shrine, or mourned for thee, and every one who has written tragic verse for thee. Bear each and all with thee to Paradise.<sup>33</sup>

According to Shī'ite informants whom I interviewed in the Indian city of Hyderabad, any *nawḥa*-reciter or *majlis*-preacher who stimulates tears in his audience himself earns *ṭhawāb* or religious merit.

Given the purpose of *nawḥa*-poetry as described above, it is not surprising that this genre favors the depiction of closely-rendered pathetic details from Karbala. This can easily be illustrated from the work of Anīs, as in the following verses from his *nawḥa* about Fāṭima Kubrā and her battlefield wedding to Qāsīm:

Kubrā kept saying, O my envy of the moon,  
O bridegroom!  
Your body is trampled underfoot by the horses, O fair one,  
O bridegroom!...

Few marriages in the world will have been like this:  
at the hour of dawn he left his bride and went off to die,  
O bridegroom!...

Your hands and feet have become reddened not with  
henna but with blood.  
In place of a tasseled crest, your head bears a wound,  
O bridegroom!...

When anyone asks me, 'Tell us, whose grave is this?,'  
I will say in tears, 'It's my grave; this is my broken heart.'  
O bridegroom!

I have become a widow, a bride of one night only, with  
heart enflamed, in misery.  
On the battlefield, at dawn, he fell beneath swordstroke  
and axe. O bridegroom!

Having given a sign with your sleeve, thus you went from  
the world.  
Never again did news of you come to your bride,  
O bridegroom!<sup>34</sup>

As is typical of the *nawḥa*-genre, in this poem Anīs selects a single moment from the Karbala drama—in this instance Fāṭima Kubrā's response to her husband's death—and then explores it for its emotional potential. Anīs here employs a favorite technique, having one of the women of Karbala function as speaker and visualizing

the episode from her perspective. This heightens the effect of immediacy and pathetic intensity. Note, too, the densely allusive quality of his verse: "Having given a sign with your sleeve, thus you went from the world." Anīs takes for granted a close familiarity with the Karbala narrative on the part of his audience. This brief reference to Qāsim's sleeve is apparently enough to awaken the audience's memory of the farewell-scene between Fāṭima and Qāsim as presented by Kāshifi: the bride asks for a token whereby she might recognize her husband among the thronging souls on Judgment Day, and Qāsim tears his sleeve in reply.

In his other *nawḥas* Anīs frequently uses the figure of Zaynab as speaker. In such poems the moment of defeat constitutes the dramatic focus:

The killer mounted on horseback rides against  
the breast of the prophet's grandson.  
From the tent Zaynab cries out, 'Halt, accursed one!  
My brother's breast is afflicted with wounds.'<sup>35</sup>

The following *nawḥa* visualizes the enemy soldiers' triumph as they prepare to mutilate the martyrs' corpses:

Zaynab cried out, 'Do not cut off the head  
of the Prophet's grandson!  
Shimr, fear God; what shamelessness is this?'<sup>36</sup>

With all her male kinfolk dead or too incapacitated to fight, Zaynab in these poems becomes spokesperson and defender of the Prophet's household. But Anīs pairs her defiance with a bitter acknowledgment of helplessness, as in the following poem where she addresses her brother's lifeless body:

How will I lift up your corpse?  
My head lacks any veil which I might spread out for you.  
Dust of the wasteland covers your body.  
Alas, beloved son of Fāṭima, O Ḥusayn!<sup>37</sup>

Zaynab's loss of her veil in defeat becomes a symbol for all the shame endured by *ahl al-bayt* at the hands of Yazīd's soldiers. Note how the veil-motif recurs in the following poem:

Your corpse did not even receive a shroud, O my brother,  
alas!  
Nor does my head have a veil to cover it; what shall I do, O  
Ḥusayn?<sup>38</sup>

These verses reflect Anīs's taste for verbal play and parallelisms: Zaynab in her humiliation lacks a veil for her head; Ḥusayn in his death lacks a shroud for his corpse. The brother and sister are separated by her inability to bury him properly, but they are united by the shame and suffering they must both endure.

Defiance and helplessness together characterize Zaynab in these *nawḥas*. One might speculate that this combination of traits has proven itself very much to the taste of the poems' audiences, for the Shī'ite community has defined itself over time as an embattled minority that has survived even when persecuted and victimized, as a group that looks beyond present-day suffering to vindication in the afterlife. Proud even in defeat, defiant even in weakness, Zaynab might be said to figure so prominently in Shī'ite devotional literature precisely because the community sees itself reflected in her experience.

The *nawḥa* continues to play an important role in Shī'ite liturgies today. It is very much a thriving genre; in Hyderabad I discovered that there exist several dozen *mātamī gurūhān* [guilds that sponsor Muḥarram liturgies] in the city's Shī'ite neighborhoods, and that most of these guilds have poets who compose fresh *nawḥas* annually for performance in *majlis*-settings and public processions. These hymns are meant to be performed together with the action of *mātam*, a term that warrants discussion here. *Mātam* in its most general sense is an Arabic term denoting acts of lamentation for the dead; in Shī'ite Islam it refers to gestures of mourning for the Karbala martyrs, most typically in the form of repetitive and forceful breast-beating. The thudding sound of *mātam*, as a group of participants slap themselves in unison, constitutes a percussive accompaniment to the chanted *nawḥa*: the human chest becomes a musical instrument. To appreciate the *nawḥa* genre fully one must be aware of its performance context: all those present, old and young, women as well as men, participate in the action of *mātam*. Rhythm, as one might imagine, thus becomes an important dimension of *nawḥa* composition; and poets whom I interviewed in Hyderabad told me that they keep in mind the demands of vocal recitation and public performance as they create their *nawḥas*.<sup>39</sup> Consider the following poem, a *nawḥa* written for a Hyderabad guild called Gurūh-i Ja'fari:

All those in prison wail and lament:  
the innocent one has departed this world; weep,

yes, weep in grief.

Sakīna, Sakīna!, her mother keeps saying,  
slapping herself in sorrow; weep, yes, weep in grief.

In their midst, the corpse of the sinless one, alas!  
And all about there has risen up the sound of crying;  
weep, yes, weep in grief.

For the sake of this four year old girl,  
all those in the women's quarters beat their breasts;  
weep, yes, weep in grief....

O what outrage: that there is still visible on the girl's neck  
the mark of the rope; weep, yes, weep in grief.

Her hands still cover her ears, alas!

The blood has dried on her shoulders; weep, yes, weep in grief.<sup>40</sup>

Repetition and simplicity of phrasing characterize this *nawḥa*, traits that are typical of the poems I collected in Hyderabad and Lahore. The topic here is the death of Ḥusayn's daughter Sakīna while imprisoned in Damascus. As in the nineteenth-century poetry of Anīs, today's *nawḥas* focus on single moments from the Karbala drama and then elaborate these with grief-stirring details ["O what outrage: that there is still visible on the girl's neck the mark of the rope"]. Of all the children said to have been present and suffered at Karbala, Sakīna is one of the most frequently cited in the recently composed *nawḥas* I have examined. Just as Zaynab symbolizes defiance and resistance in defeat, and Fāṭima al-Zahrā' passive endurance throughout eternity, Sakīna becomes emblematic of all the sufferings visited on *ahl al-bayt*. Her youth and innocence make her perfect for this role, ensuring an indignant response on the congregation's part as they hear the catalogue of what she underwent: thirst during the siege; slaps and scourgings by Yazīd's men; a frantic search among the battlefield corpses for her dead father. The *nawḥas* conjure forth excruciating close-up views of all these sorrows; and the audience is assumed to be so familiar with Sakīna's agonies that the poet can sometimes indulge in oblique allusion in describing her torments. For example, the verse cited above, "Her hands still cover her ears, alas! The blood has dried on her shoulders," alludes to one of the well-known indignities undergone by Sakīna in captivity: the enemy soldiers stripped her of her jewelry, tearing the rings from her ears so that her earlobes spouted blood. It is hard to

overstate how closely bound up with the notion of innocent suffering is Sakīna's name. In Muḥarram *majlis*-sermons I attended in India, when the preacher reached the *maṣā'ib*-portion of his talk (where the agonies of the martyrs are enumerated and enlarged on), it was sufficient for the speaker merely to begin to refer to Ḥusayn's daughter—"And then we come to Sakīna...."—a phrase followed by a sighing pause on the preacher's part, and at once the congregation bursts into moans.

The Sakīna-poem cited above contains a reference to the act of *mātām*: "All those in the women's quarters beat their breasts." This action could be considered paradigmatic: pious women of the seventh century model behavior we should imitate today. A different kind of *mātām*-reference appears in the following two poems. The first is from the *nawḥa*-chapbook published by a Hyderabad guild called Anjuman-i Parwāna-yi Shabbīr [the Association of the Moths of Ḥusayn]:

This body might survive; it might cease to be;  
yet *mātām* in honor of the one wronged must be  
performed.

May Fāṭima's desire be fulfilled,  
regardless of whether our life survives.

This *mātām* is a prayer for Fāṭima;  
how could this *mātām* ever cease?...

For as long as there is strength in this body  
one must perform one's duty.

If fate were to grant us this happiness,  
we must give away this life of ours as a sacrifice.

Either with tears, or with heart's-blood,  
we must dampen our tunics with weeping.

A princess has arrived, one who has come to offer hope.

This *mātām* is a prayer for Fāṭima;  
how could this *mātām* ever cease?

In our eyes, even now is that time when 'Alī's son  
fell bathed in his own blood.

On the battlefield there resounded the cries for help  
of one afflicted.

Even if streaks of blood now flow from our breasts,  
may our hands never cease:

Let this *mātām* continue on behalf of the one  
who was wronged,



for as long as Fāṭima's cry comes forth.  
 This *mātām* is a prayer for Fāṭima;  
 how could this *mātām* ever cease?<sup>41</sup>

My next example is taken from another Shī'ite Hyderabadī guild, the Anjuman-i Ma'ṣūmīn [the Association of the Immaculate Ones]:

All of life is a remembrance of Karbala,  
 the Imām's victory, weeping, and tears.  
 Morning and night, let there be on our lips this very cry:  
 Hail, beloved Ḥusayn, O beloved Ḥusayn.

Ḥusayn's mother prays  
 that this same cry should always echo forth  
 from the dust of the earth to the very vault of heaven:  
 Hail, beloved Ḥusayn, O beloved Ḥusayn.

Farid, may there always be *mātām* for Ḥusayn;  
 let there be no sorrow save sorrow for Ḥusayn.  
 Until the Day of Resurrection, let there remain  
 only this season and no other:  
 Hail, beloved Ḥusayn, O beloved Ḥusayn.<sup>42</sup>

In both poems there surfaces the traditional image of Fāṭima al-Zahrā' as eternal mourner. What is remarkable here is how the image is deployed: Ḥusayn's mother asks today's Shī'ite congregants to undertake *mātām* in honor of her son. Noteworthy, too, are the repeated self-references contained in these verses: "Even if streaks of blood now flow from our breasts, may our hands never cease; let this *mātām* continue." In such verses the poet highlights the congregation and celebrants: the emphasis here is not simply the martyrs' sufferings at Karbala or the evocation of the past but rather the commemoration of Karbala in the present. The focus in these stanzas is on the Shī'ite guild, its practice of *mātām*, and the pride taken by the guild in joining its lamentation to Fāṭima's. Thereby the seventh century and the twentieth are bridged: the blood of Karbala appears on our own breasts. The shifting time-frames in such poems—a characteristic feature, I would argue, of many *Ūrdū nawḥas* published today—comprise another means for involving the congregation emotionally as it listens to these poems. For the congregation is caught up along with the chanter in breast-beating as each verse is recited; and the participants hear themselves described as engaging in a collective action for a collective purpose. Thus today's lamentation-poems, by linking sacred history from the past

with the commemoration of that history in the present, can be said to build Shī'ite communal identity. Finally, note the verse that concludes the second *nawḥa* quoted above: "Farīd, may there always be *mātam* for Ḥusayn." This is an example of the use of the *takhalluṣ*: the poet addresses himself and inserts his own name into the closing stanza of the poem, a signature-device familiar from classical Persian poetry. Here the poet employs the *takhalluṣ* to include himself in the ranks of today's Shī'ite mourners.

Two *nawḥas* in recently published *mātam*-chapbooks, one from Hyderabad, the other from Lahore, offer portraits of Zaynab that link her with Qur'ānic scripture. My first excerpt is from a poem entitled 'Zaynab made Islam safe from the flames'; the setting is the aftermath of 'Āshūrā', when the victorious soldiers of the enemy have set fire to the tents of Ḥusayn's camp. "The infant lacking milk" referred to in the first verse is 'Alī Aṣghar, the young son of Ḥusayn; 'Abbās is the brother and bodyguard of the Imām. Both were killed at Karbala:

The banner of 'Abbās, the cradle of the infant  
lacking milk,  
all the wealth remaining of the majesty of Islam:  
Zaynab rescued these from the flaming tent.  
Zaynab made Islam safe from the flames....

Farīd, even today this sorrow is the responsibility  
entrusted to Zaynab,  
she who endured every injury and outrage after the  
martyrdom.  
Zaynab safeguarded the goal and aspirations of Ḥusayn;  
Zaynab made Islam safe from the flames.<sup>43</sup>

'The responsibility entrusted to Zaynab' is my translation of the phrase *Zaynab kī amānat*. The term *amānat* [Arabic *amāna*] occurs very seldom in the Qur'ān, but it does appear in one celebrated scriptural passage, 33.72: "We offered the trust/responsibility to the heavens and the earth." This passage is of vital importance in both *ṣūfi* and Shī'ite exegesis. Mahmoud Ayoub summarizes Shī'ite interpretations of this Qur'ānic term:

The Shī'i community, in renewing every year the memory of the martyred Imam and his family and friends, renews its own covenant with the Imams, a covenant which is identified with the primordial trust [*amānah*] that God offered to all of creation, but which only

man accepted. This *amānah*...is interpreted by the Shi'i community to be the Imamate of the twelve Imams. The *amānah*, or divine charge, is the Imams themselves and their *walāyah*, which here means both their nearness to God as His friends [*awliyā'*] and also their authority [*walāyah*] over men.<sup>44</sup>

In the modern-day *nawḥa* quoted above, the Hyderabadī poet applies the term *amānat* to the burden of responsibility and endurance assumed by Zaynab after the death of the Imām Ḥusayn. My second excerpt, taken from a Pakistanī chapbook published in Lahore, reads as follows:

Ḥusayn's prostration in prayer protected the honor of the prophets;  
in prison his sister perfected the religion....

O brother, your last prostration in prayer has been completed.

Now your sister has yielded up her veil as alms.

This crowded bazaar of Syria has grown worse than the place where you were slain.

The shame of public exposure has killed me even before my death.<sup>45</sup>

The verse "in prison his sister perfected the religion" [*kar diyā dīn ko mukammal qayd mayn hamshīr ne*] harbors an echo of Qur'ān 5.3: "Today I have perfected your religion" [*al-yawm akmaltu lakum dīnakum*]. Badshah Husain in his *Shī'ite* commentary on the Qur'ān states that this passage was revealed on the occasion of *Ghadīr Khumm*, when the Prophet Muḥammad publicly proclaimed 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib as his successor. "Before this general proclamation of Our Lord's Imamate," asserts the commentator, "Islam was neither perfect as a religion, nor was God wholly pleased with it."<sup>46</sup> The implication of our *nawḥa's* Qur'ānic allusion, then, would seem to be: upon Muḥammad's death his cousin 'Alī succeeded him as religious leader of the Islamic community; upon Ḥusayn's death his sister Zaynab succeeded him, if not as religious leader, at least as Imāmic regent, protecting the life of the fourth Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn during the spiritual interregnum until his health was restored and he could assume his hereditary leadership role as Imām. Both of the Qur'ānic passages cited above, 33.72 and 5.3, are understood by *Shī'ite* exegetes to refer to the Imāms; yet in these poems the

*nawha*-composers apply the scriptural verses to Zaynab, as if to acknowledge that for a time a woman safeguarded the line of the Imāms until traditional patriarchal authority could be reinstated.

#### ON THE VOLATILITY OF SYMBOLS:

#### ZAYNAB AND THE 1979 IRANIAN REVOLUTION

In this essay I have noted certain recurrent features in the portraits of Shī'ite holy women as they appear in the devotional literature: Fāṭima al-Zahrā' is associated with passive endurance and eternal mourning; Zaynab, with defiance in defeat; Sakīna and Fāṭima Kubrā, with vulnerability and suffering visualized in pathetic detail. Yet it should not be assumed that these portraits remain necessarily invariant over time. They may be subject to change, in tandem with the changing social roles of the women who listen to the stories and recite the Karbala poems as they perform *mātam* during the annual Muḥarram liturgy. In an essay entitled "Sexuality and Shī'i Social Protest in Iran," Nahid Yeganeh and Nikki Keddie have argued that "historically, Shī'i ideology on women's position has varied contextually....Shī'i protest at one time and place became the status quo in another time and place."<sup>47</sup> It stands to reason that during times of rapid social change, models of ideal behavior would be represented differently to reflect changes in Shī'ite ideology. Such in fact has been the case in Iranian society over the last thirty years. Marcia Hermansen's study of the Sorbonne-trained Iranian sociologist 'Alī Shari'atī (d. 1977) discusses how Shari'atī criticized the passivity traditionally associated with Fāṭima al-Zahrā'; likewise he attempted to reinterpret the doctrine of *shafā'a* [also transliterated *shifā'at*, 'intercession for the forgiveness of sins'], arguing that this concept tempted Shī'ites into social irresponsibility and moral inertness. The influence of French existentialist philosophy is apparent in his presentation of the Prophet's daughter:

Fatimeh had to become Fatimeh on her own; being the daughter of Muhammad would not do it for her....Fatimeh through the *shifā'at* of Muhammad became Fatimeh, for *shifā'at* in Islam is the cause of acquiring 'being worthy of salvation' not a means for 'the salvation of the unworthy.' It is the individual who must seize *shifā'at* from the intercessor and through it change his [or her] own destiny....He must seize it; *Shafi'* [the intercessor] does not bestow it [automatically] on the individual.<sup>48</sup>

Anne Betteridge has examined how female figures from *Shī'ite* sacred history were mobilized to encourage opposition to Muḥammad Riḍā *Shāh* Pahlavi during the Iranian Revolution of the late 1970s: although Fāṭima al-Zahrā' was acknowledged as the appropriate model in times of peace, her daughter Zaynab was put forward, in the period of crisis during the Āyat Allāh *Khumaynī's* struggle with the *Shāh*, as "a role model for inspiring political opposition among women."<sup>49</sup> Zaynab's assertiveness and defiance were praised as behavior appropriate for imitation by women in the political and social realms. Meanwhile the Iranian clergy, interpreting contemporary events in the light of Karbala, denounced the *Shāh* as a second Yazīd. The presentation proved successful. Writing shortly after the victory of the 1979 Revolution, Farah Azari, one of the founding members of the Iranian Women's Solidarity Group, stated that:

For a time it was Zeinab who came to the forefront to symbolise the ideal of the modern revolutionary Muslim woman in Iran. Those enigmatic young women clad in a black chador...bearing machine guns, aspire to follow Zeinab. It is not inappropriate that they have been sometimes referred to as 'the commandos of her holiness Zeinab' [*Komando-haye Hazrat-e Zeinab*']....What has happened is that the continuing revolutionary climate of Iran demanded a more active role of its female population than could have been provided by the previous passive ideal of Fatima.<sup>50</sup>

For the patriarchally-oriented Iranian clergy, however, the challenge has been how to domesticate and channel this newly vitalized women's ideology now that the *Shāh* is gone and the theocracy is firmly in place. According to Guity Nashat, the Islamic Republic has made use of "an extensive campaign in the press" to avoid losing control over the icons of the women's movement: Zaynab is saluted as an appropriate role model in times of revolution; "but since the rule of justice has been restored, women must resume the role required of them by their Muslim duty. The model they are urged to emulate for normal (nonrevolutionary) times is that of Fatimeh."<sup>51</sup>

In recent years Zaynab seems to have emerged as that figure from sacred history who offers the greatest challenge to traditionally-minded *Shī'ites*. One solution to her challenge has been to label Zaynab's behavior, precisely because of her assertiveness and high

visibility, as atypical and non-normative, as an index of the disturbed conditions of Islamic society in her lifetime. M.H. Bilgrami makes this argument in the introduction to a recent devotional biography of Zaynab entitled *The Victory of Truth*:

According to the *shari'ah* (revealed law) of Allah women are hidden treasures, neither to be displayed nor advertised. Theirs is a subtle, fundamental and discreet domain....But this rule can only apply if all the other elements of a pure Muslim society are equal. If the application of the divinely directed formula is chaotic and imbalanced, then that is the time when a woman feels compelled to emerge into the open arena. This is the situation in which Zaynab (a.s.) found herself.<sup>52</sup>

#### CONCLUDING NOTE:

##### MYTH AND HISTORICITY IN THE SHI'ITE TRADITION

At various points in discussing the women of the household of the Imāms, I have acknowledged discrepancies between the historical record and the devotional literature with regard to questions such as the wedding of Fāṭima Kubrā, the burial of the martyrs, and the status of Ḥusayn's legendary wife, Shāhrbānū. I have not emphasized these discrepancies because I believe that, in understanding Shi'ite piety, what is important is not determining the historicity of events so much as glimpsing the vision, the worldview, that is communally experienced and shared and perceived as true. Recorded in the narratives of the women of Karbala is a collective experience, of expropriation and persecution, of survival as a minority community. In this sense the Karbala story can be described as myth: a story that makes sense of shared historical experience, that tells a people who they are, that defines them by insisting on the necessity and inevitability of the suffering they have collectively had to undergo. The Karbala myth also mirrors a worldview that is at base idealistic and tragic; idealistic, because it postulates an unrealized order worth dedicating one's life to; tragic, because humans unaided cannot and will never attain this order. The world as it is constituted is flawed, the flaw resulting from human disobedience to God and the evil we choose to commit in our exercise of divinely granted free will. At Karbala, Yazīd's soldiers chose to violate the religio-political order intended by God when they killed Ḥusayn and subjected the women of his household to humiliation and imprisonment. The Karbala

tragedy is the consummate expression of this fault-line, of human freedom to disobey God's will; for as long as the flaw remains, the tragedy will repeat itself across time. As we have seen in glancing at the influence of the Iranian Revolution, new historical circumstances and social pressures will cause modulations in the presentation of the mythic figures linked to Karbala; but for as long as the tragic vision endures, these stories will continue to be told.

## NOTES

1. For more information on early Shī'ite history, see Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 1–22. For Fātima's death from grief over the Prophet, see Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-kāfi*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt 'Ilmiyya Islāmiyya, n.d.), with Persian translation and commentary by Sayyid Jawād Muṣṭafawī, vol. 2, pp. 355–56. For other incidents in the life of Fātima, see Michael Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 14–15.
2. I.K.A. Howard, trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 74–75, 87–88.
3. S. Husain M. Jafri, *Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1979), pp. 198–205; Momen, pp. 31–33.
4. For a discussion of intercession see David Pinault, *The Shi'ites: Ritual and Popular Piety in a Muslim Community* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 16–19.
5. 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafāṭih al-jinān* (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Muḥammad 'Alī 'Ilmī, 1964). For a discussion of the material in the *Mafāṭih*, see Mohammad Amir Haider Khan, *Prayers and Invocations*, Muaiyyid-ul-Uloom Series (Lucknow: Madrasat-ul-Waizeen, n.d.), pp. 3–4, 30, 64. See also William C. Chittick, ed. and trans., *A Shi'ite Anthology* (Albany: State University of New York, 1981), p. 18.
6. Qummī, pp. 100–01, 539–40, 574.
7. Kulaynī, vol. 1, p. 349; cf. also vol. 1, pp. 346–47.
8. Kulaynī, vol. 1, p. 278.
9. For a discussion of light-imagery in Islamic *ṣūfī* mysticism, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1975), pp. 259–63 *et passim*; see also pp. 96, 214 for *ṣūfī* interpretations of Qur'ān 24.35.
10. Louis Massignon, "Die Ursprünge und die Bedeutung des Gnostizismus im Islam," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1937 (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1938): 64–65.
11. Momen, p. 119.

12. For the interaction of prose and poetry in narrative performance settings, see David Pinault, *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), pp. 102–107, and the references cited therein.
13. Ḥusayn Wā'iz al-Kāshifī, *Rawḍat al-shuhadā'* (Tehran: Intishārāt Islāmiyya, 1952), p. 321.
14. Kāshifī, p. 322.
15. Kāshifī, p. 322.
16. See the discussion in Vernon Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shi'ite Devotional Rituals in South Asia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1993), p. 105.
17. Shāykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād: The Book of Guidance into the Lives of the Imāms*, trans. I.K.A. Howard (London: Muhammadi Trust, 1981), pp. 359–60. Cf. *Ṭabarī*, vol. 19, pp. 152–53.
18. For a discussion of the liturgies held annually in honor of Qāsim and Fāṭima Kubrā, see Pinault, *The Shiites*, pp. 131–35.
19. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār* (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 1966), vol. 45, pp. 194–96.
20. Kāshifī, p. 363.
21. Kulaynī, vol. 2, pp. 368–69.
22. Majlisī, vol. 46, p. 11.
23. Kulaynī, vol. 2, p. 369.
24. Yann Richard, *Shi'ite Islam* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), p. 34.
25. Shāykh al-Mufīd, p. 379.
26. Fischer, p. 261.
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THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL:  
WOMEN AND 'FITNA' IN THE 'SIRAT DHĀT  
AL-HIMMA': THE STORY OF NŪRĀ

*Remke Kruk*

*This paper shows how the Nūrā episode in the Sirat Dhāt al-Himma brings into focus the role of woman as respectively a sexual and a non-sexual being, the one being the source of social disorder [fitna] and the other of social stability.*

U ntil the past two decades the great epics of popular Arabic literature have received relatively little attention from scholars, either Arab or Arabist. After the brief flare-up of interest which followed the discovery early in the nineteenth century of the popular epic of 'Antar ("an Arab Homer!"), the attention of the scholarly public quickly waned and turned again to other matters. Many overviews of Arabic literature do not even mention the huge corpus of popular epics, traditional equivalents of today's soap operas, that over the centuries have been an essential part of traditional Arab culture. The Arab intellectual elite of the past looked down on these stories which formed the stock-in-trade of the professional storytellers. For a long time the Arabists followed in their wake. A growing interest in oral and semi-oral literary traditions gradually brought about a change, but until a few months ago the only scholarly work that gave a full overview of all the representative works in this genre was the sixth volume of Ahlwardt's catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts in the Berlin Library (1896).<sup>1</sup>

M.C. Lyons' three-volume publication *The Arabian Epic* (1995), which, among other things, contains synopses of most of the epics as well as a narrative index to the synopses, has now changed all that,<sup>2</sup> as has Hasan el-Shamy's two-volume *Folk Traditions of the Arab World* (1995), a classification of motifs current in popular culture.<sup>3</sup>

For the first time now we can see at a glance how widespread certain themes and motifs were in Arabic narrative texts. A closer study of this type of material is likely to yield new insights into many aspects of the Arabic literary tradition, including 'high' literature. Against the background of the popular narrative tradition, the classical *maqāmāt*, for instance, may be seen from a different perspective.

#### WARRIOR WOMEN

The epic tradition, just as Arabic popular narrative in general, abounds in themes and motifs that rarely occur in other Arab literary genres. This type of material may thus offer a fresh view on literary representation. The role of women is a good example: popular narrative casts them in roles that are quite different from those accorded to women in the 'high' literary tradition.

In an article that appeared in 1993, I drew attention to the fact that female versions of knightly warriors are among the stock characters of Arabic (and, for that matter, Persian and Turkish) epic literature.<sup>4</sup> Lyons's analysis of these epics shows that female warriors appear on the scene even more frequently than I had suspected, which confirms the impression that popular conceptions about the role of women in Arabic narrative literature have always been far off the mark. In this respect, epic literature, as I remarked earlier, shows a continuity with what is also apparent in many tales from the *One Thousand and One Nights*: women are steadfast, clever, and resourceful, while their male counterparts have little merit aside from being handsome and male.<sup>5</sup>

In Arabic epic literature [the so-called *sīra*-literature] many leading male heroes have their female counterparts. In some cases, she is a close relation; in others, the heroine starts out as an enemy but ends up as the wife of either the main hero or one of his *paladins*. Attempts have been made to bring them under one heading: John Renard, for instance, argues that women in Islamic epic literature "invariably function as links to the outside world, to the lands and peoples beyond those of the principal heroes."<sup>6</sup> There may be some truth in this (the wives of 'Antar are a point in case), but in a number of instances the theory does not apply; many women, among them female warriors, make their appearance as part of the inner circle of leading heroes. *Dhāt al-Himma*, the leading heroine of the epic bearing her name, is the most obvious example.<sup>7</sup>

The Arabian epics, with their colorful reworking of familiar story themes and motifs, offer not only fascinating reading but also ample food for analyses of various kinds, not least because—again like modern soaps—they offer us a view as to what appealed to traditional Arab coffee-house audiences. From this, too, one may occasionally obtain a glimpse of the secret wishes, taboos, and fears harbored by such audiences.<sup>8</sup>

Warrior women figure prominently in this literature. I prefer not to call these women 'Amazons,' as is often done; the Classical Amazon myth, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>9</sup> has very specific characteristics that turn up in only a few of the Arabic warrior women stories, and indiscriminate use of the term may thus cause confusion.

Fatima Mernissi's autobiographical book *Dreams of Trespass* (1994) offers us an interesting instance of the fascination which the figure of the warrior woman held, and holds, within an Islamic cultural background.<sup>10</sup> She describes the appearance of a woman on horseback, taking an active part in 'Abd al-Karīm's war against the French and the Spanish. Mernissi's grandfather was so taken by the woman that he married her, and she was lovingly included in the household and taken care of by his other wives. One suspects that the idyllic relationship between the women which is painted here may, like other elements of the book, be more programmatic than authentic,<sup>11</sup> but the image of the gallant woman setting out on horseback is certainly engaging.

Is the heroic image of the warrior-heroines of Arabian epics defined in ways that are essentially different from that of the male heroes? This matter requires further study. One aspect at least strikes me: in all Arabic epics the 'straight-forward' heroic behavior of the leading male hero stands in counterpoint to the subversive, trickster-like activities of either a second leading character (Lyons's "man of wiles") or to the hero himself. This also applies in the case of the one epic with a female leading hero, the *Sirat Dhāt al-Himma*.<sup>12</sup> Not only is she supplemented by the picaresque figure of al-Baṭṭāl, but *Dhāt al-Himma* also engages in tricking her opponents by donning all kinds of disguises, even venturing into enemy territory while wearing them.

Before the general problem of the female heroic image can be tackled, however, we need a clearer picture, which this paper attempts to provide, of the various roles which these women play in the narratives.

NŪRĀ, HER LOVERS, AND DHĀT AL-HIMMA

In my article referred to earlier, I made a preliminary attempt to outline a typology of the warrior woman in Arabic epic.<sup>13</sup> There, emphasis lay on the stereotype; here, I will try to approach the subject from another angle. For this purpose I have chosen an episode from the *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, namely that which centers on the figure of Princess Nūrā, the Byzantine princess whose devastating effect on the men around her brought Udo Steinbach in his monograph on the *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* to compare her to Helen in the works of Homer.<sup>14</sup>

Within the *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, the episode of Nūrā is part of a larger cycle which concerns the battle of the Muslims (headed by Dhāt al-Himma and her son 'Abd al-Wahhāb) against seven Byzantine castles, inhabited by the seven sons of King Aqrīṭash (XIII, p. 43). Having conquered the fourth castle, the Muslims go on to the fifth. This is the Blood Castle, so called because of the red stone from which it is constructed. It is inhabited by King 'Ayn al-Masīḥ, who has a beautiful and valiant daughter by the name of Nūrā. At the beginning of this episode, Nūrā is in a monastery at some distance from the castle (XIII, pp. 44-45). Having crossed the river which separates them from the castle, the Muslims notice the monastery, and one of their leading heroes, the wily Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl, goes to reconnoiter. Looking through the windows he sees ten beautiful girls drinking wine and making merry with three monks; in their midst is one girl who surpasses others in beauty. Al-Baṭṭāl is dazzled by the sight of her. When the girls proceed to engage in wrestling matches, the leading beauty successively defeats all her female companions. An old nun arrives and tells stories about the wars between the Arabs and the Byzantines. The heroic deeds of al-Baṭṭāl are extensively dwelt upon, and the leading girl, Nūrā, greatly taken with this unknown hero, expresses the wish to meet him, even though until now she has only been interested in women. She calls out for him to come and meet her. To her surprise, al-Baṭṭāl answers her call from outside the window, and steps into the room.<sup>15</sup> He joins in the meeting and falls immediately in love with Nūrā.

This is the beginning of a long episode (520 pages in the Cairo edition used here) of attack and counter-attack, of capture and escape, ruse and counter-ruse, in which the scene of action alternates between Muslim and Byzantine territory. In the course of these events, countless men, Muslim as well as Christian, fall in love with

Nūrā. Al-Baṭṭāl opens the line, and is quickly followed by his close friend, Dhāt al-Himma's black son 'Abd al-Wahhāb, who is the third in the leading *troika*. The enemy-side has its own *troika*, also consisting of a woman, a man, and a trickster: the vile monk Shūmadris (Lyons vocalizes the name as 'Shūmdaris'), his wife, Shūmā, and the treacherous judge 'Uqba. Shūmadris and 'Uqba, too, are both in love with Nūrā. The aged Byzantine emperor, Manuwīl [Manuel], and the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd also fall for her. Dhāt al-Himma frequently becomes quite exasperated, seeing her band of brave warriors turn into a bunch of naughty and irresponsible little boys whom she can only control with considerable effort and at the cost of personal comfort. The episode finally ends with the wedding of Nūrā and al-Baṭṭāl, after which Nūrā is converted to Islam and gradually becomes part of the Muslim army, in which she continues to play a leading role. In one of the many confrontations with the enemy she loses her baby son, Madhbāhūn, who, after being raised at a Christian court, later reappears in the story and joins his parents in their campaigns against the Byzantines.

This story offers a wealth of intriguing themes and motifs. Of its many interesting aspects, I consider two here. One is the representation of the hero in love; the other has to do with the central theme of the Nūrā-episode. As to the first, I focus on the way in which the male heroes completely lose their sense of dignity and responsibility when their relationship to Nūrā is at stake. With respect to the second, I look at what issues are at stake in the relationship between the two leading women of the episode, Nūrā and Dhāt al-Himma. The episode brings into focus roles of woman as respectively a sexual and a non-sexual being; the one being the source of social disorder and disruption [*fitna*],<sup>16</sup> the other the instigator of social stability and order. It also, sometimes very subtly, touches upon the affinities as well as the antagonisms which move the relationship between these two manifestations of womanhood.

#### ORDER AND DISORDER

Disorder, as stated above, starts wherever Nūrā appears. Her beauty causes havoc in the hearts of all the men who lay eyes on her, and their infatuation affects seriously their sense of propriety and social responsibility. It also, to no lesser extent, impairs the soundness of their judgment.

As a result, not only is Dhāt al-Himma's sense of propriety seriously outraged, but she also has to face a long sequence of practical problems. Although she is prepared to make significant allowances for her men's behavior, she does not let them, especially her son, get away with everything. She is the one who has to uphold the standards of which her menfolk lose sight.

Then there is her attitude towards Nūrā, the source of all this trouble: while on the one hand she feels sympathy and admiration for her, Dhāt al-Himma also has to subdue Nūrā and eliminate her as a threat to the stability of the community.

Let us see how this takes shape in the story, starting with Nūrā's devastating effect on the men, Muslim warriors [*mujāhidūn*] as well as their Byzantine opponents.

Of course these men's infatuation allows them according to the Arab tradition to behave according to patterns that are not otherwise acceptable within this particular culture: unhappy lovers are traditionally supposed to behave in an outrageous, often self-destructive ways. They act irrationally, they pine away, they do not bother about the social acceptability of their behavior. The hapless lovers of the Bānū 'Udhra are a case in point, and Arab literary tradition, especially in poetry, has worked out this theme in extensive hyperbole. In this story, the emphasis lies on the shocking behavior of the lovers rather than on their pining away; in this context, reference is sometimes made to the 'Udhrites, the 'lovers of old' [*'ushshāq al-awwalīn*], several of whose stories are invoked (xx, p. 28).

In the story of Nūrā, the behaviour of lovers often takes hilarious forms, especially in the case of one of the main heroes of the epic, Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl. Just like similar figures in other Arabic epics he is often referred to as *'ayyār* (xix, p. 52), a term which usually denotes some form of picaresque hero. His career, as described in the epic, reflects this: he starts out as a paragon of cowardice and bad behavior (congruent with his picaresque role), but betters his life later on, although he retains aspects of his trickster nature.<sup>17</sup>

In the Nūrā-episode, however, his worst side emerges. For here we have the double effect of a picaresque hero whose behavior is yet full of transgressive elements and who, on top of this, is driven out of his senses by excessive love.

The results are shocking to his companions and friends, if not positively harmful. When, for instance, Nūrā has taken him captive

(XIII, p. 63), she spits in his face when he keeps coming back to her in spite of being forced away; he delightedly catches the spittle with his mouth. A similar instance occurs when, later in the story, he tries to rape the bound and captive Nūrā. She kicks him, frees herself, jumps upon him and spits in his face. Again he catches it in his mouth and remarks upon its sweetness (XIX, p. 49). He also enjoys being whipped by her, expressing his delight in a line of verse, to the disgust of his servant Lu'lu', who in spite of his lower social status has a far more developed sense of propriety than his master (XIX, p. 51), and often chides him. Another example is the episode where (XIX, p. 52) Lu'lu' and al-Baṭṭāl are again the captives of Nūrā and her party, and al-Baṭṭāl complains about having to walk. Lu'lu' remarks to their captors that he and the other servants are strong herdsmen, but that al-Baṭṭāl is a soft luxury product and had better be put on a donkey.

Al-Baṭṭāl's reaction upon hearing of Dhāt al-Himma's (supposed) death (XX, p. 28) is outright shocking. Instead of expressing shock and grief about the death of his long-time friend and protector, he expresses joy because Dhāt al-Himma's son, 'Abd al-Wahhāb, who is one of his many rivals for Nūrā, will be too preoccupied to bother about pursuing his suit. Again he is severely reprimanded by Lu'lu' for this attitude.

After Dhāt al-Himma and al-Baṭṭāl have abducted Nūrā and are overtaken (XIX, p. 48–49) by a Byzantine party in pursuit, Dhāt al-Himma complains that thanks to al-Baṭṭāl's crazy infatuation there is no alternative but to fight to the death. Al-Baṭṭāl agrees without much concern, remarking upon Nūrā's beauty. He then suggests that it would be better for him to hide in the mountain in order to take care of the captive Nūrā (for whom he has all kinds of lecherous plans) while Dhāt al-Himma does the fighting. She cannot help but be amused by his outrageous behavior.

When Dhāt al-Himma and her son 'Abd al-Wahhāb have fallen out over the latter's attitude towards the Nūrā affair and have arranged to decide the matter by combat, al-Baṭṭāl even urges Dhāt al-Himma to kill her son—his rival in love—during the process, a proposal which leaves her speechless (XIX, p. 30).

Throughout the episode al-Baṭṭāl endangers the lives of his companions, for which he is often reprimanded (for instance XX, p.



9) by 'Abd al-Wahhāb. One such example is (xx, p. 60) when al-Baṭṭāl endangers Yānīs, their secret ally, by (rightly) accusing him in front of their captors of being a crypto-Muslim.

Even as a lover al-Baṭṭāl cuts a poor figure, especially after his failed attempt to make Nūrā more manageable on their wedding night by drugging her. He then makes Dhāt al-Himma tie her up because he is too frightened to approach her (xx, p. 39).

His behavior in all these cases is distinctly unmanly, totally devoid of *ṣabr* [patient forbearance]: he faints because Nūrā has disappeared, and cries about his unrequited love (xix, p. 35). It is only one of the many instances in Arabic epics where a hero shows how the state of being desperately in love can affect his manly virtue, *murūwa*.

Once captured by love, the other Muslim heroes do not fare much better than al-Baṭṭāl, even though their antics are not as outrageous as his. Yet none of them balks at the betrayal of long-time loyalties as soon as they set eyes on Nūrā. Abū 'Urqūb, one of the black Muslim warriors, is so smitten with her that during a fight between Dhāt al-Himma and Nūrā (xiii, p. 61) he tries to trip up Dhāt al-Himma. Later on (xiii, p. 69–70), he strikes and wounds 'Abd al-Wahhāb during a night attack in order to ingratiate himself with Nūrā. Abū 'Urqūb then leads the Christians to the place where Dhāt al-Himma has fallen into the water. He even defects, converts to Christianity, and proposes to Nūrā—a proposal which is received by her with great hilarity. Soon after, he is killed during a fight with the Muslims.

The strongest warriors prove to be as helpless as children when they come face-to-face with Nūrā: Qarāqid, one of the black warriors (xx, p. 15), goes out of his mind when Nūrā uncovers her face at a crucial moment during the fight. This causes him to exclaim that if only she would convert to Islam he would give her everything he owns. She makes him swear to this, and then uncovers her breasts, causing his eyes to pop out. His attention thus averted, he is easily lifted from the saddle and handed over to the Christians. The same thing happens to Abū'l-Hazāhiz, another leading warrior.

The Christians fare no better: the Byzantine emperor, Manuwīl, forgets his venerable age after he has set eyes on Nūrā, and others suffer a similar fate. Nūrā's most faithful lover among the Christians is Fāraqīṭ, who as a young man fell in love with her and never got over her father's refusal to let him marry her. After her father had

taken her away, Fāraqīṭ continued to pine for her, sitting in front of her picture painted in the cupola of a church (xix, p. 41). It is of him that, twenty years later, she thinks when she has escaped from Muslim captivity, and Fāraqīṭ then comes very near to seeing his wish fulfilled: she appears at his door, wanting to marry him, and their marriage is concluded. New events, however, carry her off immediately afterwards, and when Fāraqīṭ is eventually killed the marriage is still unconsummated. Fāraqīṭ is a sympathetic character, and apparently Nūrā loves him: she kisses him (xx, p. 13), cries about the misery that she has brought upon him, and tries to save his life by going out into battle (xx, p. 14). Yet Fāraqīṭ is a pitiable figure whose every deed is decided by his urgent wish to be united with his beloved. His subservience to her wishes is such that he does not even consider asking her for an explanation when she asks him for the keys to the city gate—nor does she consider offering him one (xix, p. 74).

Even the caliph Hārūn proves helpless against Nūrā's charms. This can be seen when, driven by curiosity, he goes to visit the place where 'Abd al-Wahhāb has withdrawn with Nūrā and where he lives with her "like a child with a little bird" (xvi, p. 44). The way in which the caliph handles his feelings certainly does not always command respect: his childish dissimulation causes at best a smile, as when during another episode he suggests that Nūrā be temporarily handed over to him in order to teach him Greek (xvi, p. 60). The only characters who do not let their feelings for Nūrā seriously affect their judgment or influence their actions are the two villains of the story, 'Uqba and Shūmadris.

Dhāt al-Himma is usually shown as dismissing the childish behavior of her men with a shrug, dealing with it in a practical, if somewhat exasperated manner. Nevertheless she is profoundly shocked by the attitude taken by her son 'Abd al-Wahhāb with regard to the Nūrā-affair. Early in the affair she scolds (xiii, p. 64) al-Baṭṭāl and 'Abd al-Wahhāb, asking them whether they have come to this country for war or for play. She is especially harsh towards 'Abd al-Wahhāb, who had always been so ascetic and pious. Al-Baṭṭāl she cannot really take seriously: his witty words of excuse make her laugh in spite of her anger.

To put an end to the problems created by Nūrā, Dhāt al-Himma decrees (xix, p. 29) that al-Baṭṭāl is the most obvious candidate for

her to marry, and suggests to 'Abd al-Wahhāb that she be handed over to him. 'Abd al-Wahhāb agrees and sends the overjoyed al-Baṭṭāl to fetch Nūrā from his wife, 'Ulwā, in whose custody she has been placed. By a clever action 'Abd al-Wahhāb then sidesteps the consequences of his promise and presents himself as Nūrā's prospective husband. In an attempt to sort things out, Dhāt al-Himma proposes a combat between herself and her son, stipulating that the winner will get Nūrā (XIX, pp. 29–30). Nūrā then manages to get away while the combat takes place.

All of this is amazing behavior for men who, with the exception of al-Baṭṭāl, usually behave in a reasonable and responsible manner. That Dhāt al-Himma has a hard job in warding off the group's disintegration is obvious. She has, for instance, to use all her managerial skills [*tadbīr*], acting rather unscrupulously, too, when the Muslim army has to move on and the captive Nūrā must stay behind in the care of a to-be-appointed guardian (XIV, pp. 2–3). A number of men volunteer for the job. Dhāt al-Himma decides on somebody else altogether, a mature and very respectable warrior. She subsequently explains her choice privately to each of the three claimants, who are also leading heroes of the Muslim army, by implying to each of them that she has acted thus with the sole purpose of drawing attention away from Nūrā. It is implied that this will give her the opportunity to give her to the hero in question without too much trouble. All three are immensely grateful to her, kissing her hands and feet: "She acted thus because she was such a good and experienced leader, for she feared strife and discord [*fitna*] among the Muslims while they were in enemy territory."

Thus Nūrā represents a constant threat to the community, a danger of which Dhāt al-Himma must be constantly aware. Nūrā's mere appearance causes havoc because it unleashes male sexual desire to the point where it causes social disruption. As such Nūrā is a power that Dhāt al-Himma, the one person not involved in the sexual game, has to bring under control with all her might. Nūrā and Dhāt al-Himma represent two aspects of womanhood, each with its own specific role to play within society: the chaos-provoking seductress and the order-imposing mother. These roles are essentially two sides of the same coin, and thus the relationship between Nūrā

and Dhāt al-Himma is quite involved. For even though they are on opposite sides and at times fight each other with the utmost ferocity, the simple fact of their shared femininity sets them apart from the men. Occasionally there is even a whiff of female solidarity. Nūrā is fascinated by Dhāt al-Himma; Dhāt al-Himma is attracted by Nūrā.

This mutual attraction gives an extra flavor to passages such as that where Dhāt al-Himma, disguised as a venerable old priest, is called upon to bless Nūrā who is about to be married. Al-Baṭṭāl, who acts as the holy father's guide, incites Dhāt al-Himma to embrace and kiss Nūrā twenty times; Nūrā is very moved by the honor paid to her by this holy person. Al-Baṭṭāl avails himself of the opportunity by also embracing and kissing her, which almost causes him to faint (xix, p. 45). Nūrā addresses herself to al-Baṭṭāl in Dhāt al-Himma's presence and pours out her worries: she is left without protection or support now that the Muslims have killed her relatives, and were it not for her beauty she would be destitute, a prey to degradation and poverty. Thus, indirectly and without realizing it, she appeals for support to a fellow female.

The two women frequently take the same attitude towards the behavior of the love-sick males, an attitude which often implies contempt for the childish behavior of men who apparently are unable to stay out of trouble when their sexual appetites are involved.

To this sentiment each gives expression in a way characteristic of her role. Nūrā, sexuality incarnate, shows her contempt of the captive Muslim warriors by provoking them with sexual mockery. She dallies in front of them with her female companions, throwing herself on them, thus making the men extremely angry (xiii, p. 49). Dhāt al-Himma, embodying stern order, repeatedly chides the men with great force because of their unacceptable behavior. When Nūrā first hears about Dhāt al-Himma she is intrigued (xiii, p. 49). The monk Shūmadris tells her that the Muslims will not be so easily defeated considering the extraordinary strength and courage of Dhāt al-Himma.

The first meeting between Nūrā and Dhāt al-Himma occurs when Nūrā sees Dhāt al-Himma approaching the Blood Castle with her army (xiii, p. 57). Nūrā wants to go out and fight, but Shūmadris advises her to propose a combat between herself and Dhāt al-Himma, for Dhāt al-Himma will have to retreat slightly in order to create room for the fight. When she accepts and retreats, Nūrā treacherously

goes out with a full army and attacks. Shūmadris, the coward, stays behind (xiii, p. 57). A number of female warriors in succession then challenge the Muslims to combat, with varying results (xiii, p. 58). Nūrā fights in the rear guard, and Dhāt al-Himma, who wants to meet her, asks whether anybody has seen her. Likewise, Nūrā is looking for Dhāt al-Himma.

Nūrā finally forces a meeting. After the battle between Christians and Muslims has continued for some time, a Christian knight of striking appearance, in a golden coat of mail, richly bejewelled, comes to the fore and addresses the Arabs, proclaiming herself to be Princess Nūrā. She tries to negotiate the freedom of her father in exchange for that of 'Abd al-Wahhāb (xiii, p. 60). If they would rather have battle, she suggests a combat between herself and Dhāt al-Himma. Thus they come to meet each other face to face. It is during this combat that the Muslim soldier Abū 'Urqūb loses his head over Nūrā and in trying to come near her hampers Dhāt al-Himma in her movements, causing her to fall. Nūrā, closely followed by the Christian soldiers who fear for her the threat of Abū 'Urqūb, approaches the fallen Dhāt al-Himma. The latter, however, gives Abū 'Urqūb a tremendous kick and gets up again (xiii, p. 61), screaming loud invectives at Nūrā; in the wrestling which follows, she lifts Nūrā off the ground. The Christians, seeing their leader captive, acknowledge their defeat and fly to the castle, closely followed by the Muslims. Dhāt al-Himma takes Nūrā away and, seeing her from close by, she understands why she causes so much trouble among the men: "well, I have never felt inclined towards men, and have never wanted anyone but the King Most High; but if this girl had been a man, I would have lost my head" (xiii, p. 61).

In spite of all the blows and invective exchanged between them, Dhāt al-Himma treats the captive Nūrā with courtesy. Likewise at a later stage Nūrā holds Shūmadris back from beating the captive Dhāt al-Himma, saying that Dhāt al-Himma also treated her well when she was taken captive (279). When the tables are again turned, all the Muslims are eager to take care of Nūrā, who is once again their captive. Dhāt al-Himma declares that Nūrā be allotted to her personally and she treats her well, entrusting her to her servant Munajjah and housing her in luxurious lodgings (285).

Yet the trouble and *fitna* caused by Nūrā necessarily stand in the way of the sympathy Dhāt al-Himma feels for her. For whatever

her personal feelings may be, Dhāt al-Himma cannot tolerate disorder. For five years Nūrā has caused strife among the Muslims (xix, p. 29), and she has even caused a rift between Dhāt al-Himma and her son. Order thus has to be restored, and once she has decided on a course Dhāt al-Himma pursues it at all costs. Nūrā must be married to al-Baṭṭāl and to this purpose other people's interests have, if necessary, to be sacrificed.

This implies, among other things, that Dhāt al-Himma takes a firm attitude towards her son's wavering feelings about Nūrā. Dhāt al-Himma is fully aware of his vulnerability and the risks it involves. When 'Abd al-Wahhāb is allured by the rumor that there is an invincible knight to be confronted (xx, p. 16), she tells her son that this fearsome horseman is no other than Nūrā. She does not allow him to go out and fight her, doubting his assurances that he no longer has any feelings for her. Instead, she goes out herself and captures Nūrā (xx, p. 18). 'Abd al-Wahhāb wants to see Nūrā, but Dhāt al-Himma, guessing his aim, tells him that Nūrā needs rest in order to recover and cannot be disturbed (xx, p. 19).

'Abd al-Wahhāb's vulnerability with regard to Nūrā makes his behavior decidedly inconsistent. This, again, causes Dhāt al-Himma considerable inconvenience, but only serves to strengthen her decision that the matter must be resolved. When the Christians attempt to exchange Nūrā for the Muslims which they hold captive (xx, p. 21), 'Abd al-Wahhāb tends to go along with this, but Dhāt al-Himma says that he can freely dispose of every prisoner except Nūrā, because she is her personal captive. Dhāt al-Himma also explains why she is wary of a personal confrontation between 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Nūrā: first, Nūrā may take him captive. Second, Dhāt al-Himma does not want trouble for herself and al-Baṭṭāl after all they have already gone through. So Nūrā is not to be exchanged. 'Abd al-Wahhāb disagrees, saying that many worthy Muslim warriors are in Byzantine hands and need to be rescued. These people are not her prime concern, says Dhāt al-Himma; she will, whatever happens, hang on to Nūrā "as long as day chases night."

Dhāt al-Himma's intransigence, which aims at eliminating Nūrā as a source of constant *fitna*, does in fact cause more *fitna* by causing a split between the Muslims, the Blacks (many of whose *amīrs* are captive) siding with 'Abd al-Wahhāb, and the Banū Kilāb with Dhāt al-Himma. 'Abd al-Wahhāb refuses to give in, and Dhāt al-Himma

gets extremely angry, cursing him in the crudest manner along the lines described earlier: "Ibn al-Hārith, God curse the one who suckled you, you have no *murūwa*" (xx, p. 22). She even swears to kill 'Abd al-Wahhāb should he not go along. She walks between the ranks, almost crying with rage, and 'Abd al-Wahhāb, realizing the danger, stays out of sight.

Even when the Byzantines threaten to crucify the Muslim prisoners, Dhāt al-Himma remains adamant: Nūrā is not to be exchanged. Yet her plan almost comes to naught because, soon afterwards, she again loses Nūrā, who is taken away by her husband, Fāraqīṭ (xx, p. 33). On no account, however, will Dhāt al-Himma give up. She sets out in pursuit. She catches up with the couple and their Byzantine party, attacks like a lion, and kills Fāraqīṭ. She then charges Nūrā, pouring invectives on her: "you accursed one, you have caused me the utmost trouble."

Nūrā, who has had previous experience of Dhāt al-Himma, sees no use in resisting and surrenders herself (xx, p. 33). She is then left under the guard of the Blacks until al-Baṭṭāl has sufficiently recovered from his injuries for the wedding to take place. He is very ill indeed: Dhāt al-Himma has to nurse him for a whole month before his wounds are fully healed.

Yet Nūrā's final surrender to Dhāt al-Himma, which seemed to decide the struggle between chaos and order, turns out not to have been the end. For *fitna* is a sneaky monster that manages a treacherous twist of its tail even when it already seems to be dead. Luckily, Dhāt al-Himma is fully aware of this and she remains watchful, even though Nūrā's submission to the wedding ceremony could be taken to imply that she has given up her resistance. After the wedding contract is written, the feast starts: Dhāt al-Himma lights candles, al-Baṭṭāl sits upon a podium, and Nūrā is brought in, richly attired (xx, p. 36). She laughs and cries simultaneously, and her beauty takes everybody's breath away. At last the time comes for the couple to retire. Al-Baṭṭāl tells Dhāt al-Himma about his worries: Nūrā apparently has no inclination for him; he is convinced that she still detests him. Dhāt al-Himma is convinced that if al-Baṭṭāl does not use a trick Nūrā will betray him even during their wedding night. He is confident, however, that he will be able to handle the situation, relying on his famous sweet tongue and consummate handling of soporific drugs, should they prove

necessary. He retires with Nūrā and attempts to sweet-talk her by speaking about his love for her and about his high standing with 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Dhāt al-Himma. She, however, is not interested, and asks for something to drink. He fulfills her wish (xx, p. 37) with alacrity, and manages to slip not only some *bānj* into the glass but also an Indian sleeping-drug, so strong that "it would bring the stream of the Tigris to a halt." While Nūrā takes the glass from his hands she slips into it the poison she has received from the treacherous *qāḍī* 'Uqba. Then she sets out to distract al-Baṭṭāl's watchfulness in order to make him drink the poison. She unveils, takes off her trousers and bends over, showing the full richness of her behind, in order to divert al-Baṭṭāl's alertness. She invites him to drink first in order to set her mind at rest: she fears that he has put a sleeping draught into it. She even states that she is prepared to accept Islam, since the Masīḥ [the Mass] has obviously been powerless to protect her, and thus cannot be a god. Al-Baṭṭāl, drunken with love, stretches out his hand, saying that even should the glass contain poison he will gladly take it from her hand.

At this crucial moment Dhāt al-Himma's unwavering watchfulness pays off. Just when al-Baṭṭāl brings the glass to his lips and is about to drink, she charges in with a loud cry, asking al-Baṭṭāl whether he is out of his mind. Nūrā, very pale, denies all evil intention. Dhāt al-Himma has one of the Christian prisoners brought in and invites him to pronounce the *shahāda*. He refuses, and says that he would rather die than accept Islam, upon which Dhāt al-Himma hands him Nūrā's cup. He drinks from it and immediately "his flesh drops from his bones."

Even then Nūrā is not eliminated as a threat. Al-Baṭṭāl, greatly taken aback, angrily addresses Nūrā. She, however, turns the accusation around: so he wanted to kill her! For where could she have got the poison? And if this is not his doing, someone else, al-Baṭṭāl's wife or one of the slave girls, must be involved. Al-Baṭṭāl is immediately prepared to give her the benefit of the doubt. Dhāt al-Himma insists, swearing by all the holy things of Islam, that Nūrā is the culprit. This greatly distresses al-Baṭṭāl, for he cannot bear to see his hopes go unfulfilled. He cries, but Nūrā persists in answering him with cruel words, rejecting his love.

Then the final struggle between Nūrā and Dhāt al-Himma takes place. In a furious attempt to finally subdue her, Dhāt al-Himma



throws herself upon Nūrā and hits her in the chest. Who does she think she is, diverting the attention of God's warriors [*mujāhidīn*] to this extent? The ensuing fight finally leaves Nūrā totally exhausted and no longer able to resist. Dhāt al-Himma, however, is not prepared to take any more risks: she firmly ties Nūrā up, winding the rope all around her. Her feet too, cries al-Baṭṭāl, so that she cannot kick me, and then leave me alone with her! Dhāt al-Himma assures him that there is no need: Nūrā has no more strength left in her. Yet he insists, and laughingly she complies with his wish. Then she leaves them alone, and the marriage is finally consummated.

The (to our sensibilities) shocking violence of this ending demonstrates that woman's sexuality as a source of *fitna* has to be brought under control at whatever cost. Apparently this aim is not yet fulfilled by making her lose her virginity, as for instance the story of Maymūna, another warrior princess in the same epic, makes clear: consummation of the marriage is only the first step. For even though this will make her lose much of her appeal for other men, she continues to be a risk until she has happily settled down in marriage, which does not necessarily imply that she turns into a housebound wife. Few of the warrior heroines settle for a domestic life after marriage, and even motherhood does not keep them away from battle.

The continuation of Nūrā's story also illustrates this point. Her hatred for al-Baṭṭāl gradually turns into love, and when he feels sufficiently confident about her feelings towards him, he leaves her behind to join his comrades in battle. Nūrā then converts to Islam and shortly afterwards gives birth to a son. From then on she regularly takes part in the Muslim forays, often playing a leading role, and is indeed one of the characters who survives until the very end of the epic.

Female sexuality has thus been brought under control and order is restored in the community. The fearsome Dhāt al-Himma, unwavering in her equally stern and caring motherly role, is the one who has to bring this about. Here, as throughout the epic, she is the guardian of the community's values as well as of its unity and order.<sup>18</sup>

## NOTES

1. W. Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften der königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1896), vol. 8.
2. M.C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Story-Telling*, vol. 1: *Introduction*; vol. 2: *Analysis*; vol. 3: *Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
3. Hasan M. el-Shamy, *Folk Traditions of the Arab World. A Guide to Motif Classification*, 2 vols. (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995).
4. Remke Kruk, "Warrior women in Arabic popular romance: Qannāṣa bint Muzāḥim and other valiant ladies, Part I," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 24 (1993): 213–30.
5. In this context, reference may be made to the study on the poetry of the *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* by Hānī al-'Amad, entitled: *Malāmiḥ al-shakhṣiyya al-'arabiyya fī l-sīrat al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma; dirāsa fī l-dalālat al-shi'rīya*, [Features of the Arab Character in the Narrative of Princess Dhāt al-Himma; A study in the poetic indications] (Amman: Publications of the University of Jordan, 1988) which also devotes considerable attention to the role of women in the epic; it includes interesting, although sometimes uncritical, observations. Consult Marius Canard, s.v. "Dhū l-Himma," EI(2), vol. 2, pp. 233–39, and also Canard's "Les principaux personnages du roman de chevalerie arabe Dhat al-Himma wa-l-Battal," *Arabica* 8 (1961): 158–73.
6. John Renard, *Islam and the Heroic Image: Themes in Literature and the Visual Arts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), p. 23.
7. See the work of Claudia Ott, *Der falsche Asket: Ursprung und Entwicklung einer Romanfigur aus der sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma Magisterarbeit, Fach Islamkunde* (Tübingen: Universität Tübingen, 1992).
8. Not necessarily to be interpreted strictly along the rather stark and dogmatic lines of Fatna A. Sabbah in *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984).
9. Remke Kruk, "Clipped Wings: Medieval Arabic Adaptations of the Amazon Myth," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 1:2 (November 1994): 132–51.
10. Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass, Tales of a Harem Girlhood*. (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1994).
11. Marjo Buitelaar, *Rev. of Fatima Mernissi, Het verboden dakterras, Sharḥiyyat* 6.2 (1994): 171–74.
12. Several editions exist of the *Sīrat al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma*, the epic in which the episode discussed here is included. For my earlier article "Warrior Women," I used Nabīla Ibrahīm, ed. *Sīrat al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma*. (Cairo: n.p., n.d. [published some time between 1967 and 1971], reprint: Riyadh: Dār al-Mirrikh, 1985); but since M.C. Lyons's recent study of the epics refers to the later, undated, Cairo edition published by

Maktabat Aḥmad al-Ḥanafī, *Sīrat al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma wa-waladihā 'Abd al-Wahhāb wa-l-amīr Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl wa-'Uqba shaykh ad-dalāl wa-Shūmadris al-muḥtāl* (Cairo: Maktabat Aḥmad al-Ḥanafī, n.d.), 7 vols., 70 parts, references in the present paper are to this edition. Both editions consist of seven volumes, each of which contains ten 'books,' which have separate page numbering. Reference is thus not to volume, but to book number and page. For the benefit of those who only have access to the more recent Beirut edition (also seven volumes but not divided into the traditional seventy books), I provide here the corresponding volume and page numbers in this edition, *Sīrat al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma wa-waladihā 'Abd al-Wahhāb wa-l-amīr Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl wa-'Uqba shaykh ad-dalāl wa-Shūmadris al-muḥtāl* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-thaqāfiya. 1400/1980), 7 vols.

Corresponding page numbers of the Beirut edition for the references in this paper: XIII: 44=245; 49=252; 57=262-63; 58=264; 59=265; 60=266; 61=266-67; 63=270; 64=271; 69-70=278; 70-71=279. XIV: 2=285; XVI: 44=527; XIX: 29-30=789-91; 35=797-98; 41=802; 48-9=813-14; 49=816; 51=819; 52=820-21; 60=830; 74=848; XX: 15=864; 16=868; 19=870; 22=874; 23=875; 28=882; 33=888-89; 36=893; 37=895; 39=897-98.

13. Kruk, "Warrior women."

14. Udo Steinbach, *Dhāt al-Himma. Kulturgeschichtlichen Untersuchungen zu einem arabischen Volksroman* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1972).

15. On the 'man of wiles's' ability to appear whenever his name is called see Lyons, vol. 2, p. 299, no. 48.

16. See also Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil. Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*, rev. ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), for example, p. 41; also Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1992), for example, p. 43.

17. On the trickster/picaro archetype, see Ulrich Wicks, *Picaresque Narrative, Picaresque Fictions: A Theory and Research Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 339-41.

18. See also my "Back to the Boudoir: Versions of the *Sīrat Hamza*, Women Warriors, and Literary Unity," in L. Jongen and J. Onderdelinden, eds., *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 48: forthcoming (1997).

SAYYIDA ḤURRA:

THE ISMĀ'ILĪ ṢULAYḤID QUEEN OF YEMEN

*Farhad Daftary*

*The career of the queen Sayyida Hurra is a unique instance of its kind in the entire history of medieval Islam, for she exercised the political as well as religious leadership of ṢulayḤid Yemen; and in both these functions she was closely associated with the Ismā'īlī Fāṭimid dynasty.*

Few women rose to positions of political prominence in the medieval *dār al-Islām*, and, perhaps with the major exception of Sayyida Ḥurra, none can be cited for having attained leadership in the religious domain. A host of diverse factors have accounted for a lack of active participation of women in the political and religious affairs of the Islamic world during the medieval and later times; and the associated complex issues are still being debated among scholars of different disciplines and among Muslims themselves. Be that as it may, there were occasional exceptions to this rule in the medieval *dār al-Islām*, indicating that opportunities did in principle exist for capable women to occupy positions of public prominence under special circumstances. This article briefly investigates the career and times of the foremost member of this select group, namely the queen Sayyida Ḥurra who, in a unique instance in the entire history of medieval Islam, combined in her person the political as well as the de facto religious leadership of ṢulayḤid Yemen; and in both these functions was closely associated with the Fāṭimid dynasty and the headquarters of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* or mission centred at Cairo.

The Fāṭimids, who established their own Ismā'īlī Shī'ī caliphate in rivalry with the Sunnī 'Abbāsids, were renowned for their tolerance towards other religious communities, permitting meritorious non-Isma'īlī Muslims and even non-Muslims to occupy the position of vizier and other high offices in their state. As part of their general

concern with education, the Fāṭimids also adopted unprecedented policies for the education of women. From early on in the reign of the founder of the dynasty, 'Abd Allāh ['Ubayd Allāh] al-Mahdī (297–322/909–34), the Fāṭimids organized popular instruction for women.<sup>1</sup> And from the time of al-Mu'izz (341–65/953–75), who transferred the seat of the Fāṭimid state to Egypt and founded the city of Cairo, more formal instruction was developed for women, culminating in the *majālis al-ḥikma* [sessions of wisdom] on Ismā'īlī doctrines. Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442),<sup>2</sup> quoting al-Musabbihī (d. 420/1029) and other contemporary Fāṭimid chroniclers, has preserved valuable details on these lectures which were delivered regularly on a weekly basis under the direction of the Fāṭimid chief *dā'i*, the administrative head of the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī *da'wa* organization. The entire program was also closely scrutinized by the Fāṭimid caliph-imām, the spiritual head of the *da'wa*. The sessions, organized separately for women and men, were arranged in terms of systematic courses on different subjects and according to the participants' degree of learning. Large numbers of women and men were instructed in various locations. For women, there were sessions at the mosque of al-Azhar, while the Fāṭimid and other noble women received their lectures in a special hall at the Fāṭimid palace. As reported by Ibn al-Ṭuwayr (d. 617/1220), special education for women evidently continued under the Fāṭimids until the fall of their dynasty in 567/1171.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of these educational policies and the generally tolerant attitudes of the Fāṭimids, there were many educated women in the Fāṭimid royal household and at least some among them who were also endowed with leadership qualities did manage to acquire political supremacy. In this regard, particular mention should be made of the shrewd Sitt al-Mulk, the sister of the Fāṭimid caliph-imām al-Ḥākīm (386–411/996–1021), who ruled efficiently as the virtual head of the Fāṭimid state in the capacity of regent during the first four years of the caliphate of al-Ḥākīm's son and successor, al-Zāhir, until her death in 415/1024. There was also al-Mustaṣfir's mother, who although not brought up in Egypt did become a powerful regent during the first decade of her son's caliphate (427–87/1036–94); and subsequently, in 436/1044, all political power was openly seized and retained by her for a long period. It is significant to note that the ascendancy of these women to political prominence

was not challenged by the Fāṭimid establishment or the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* organization; and, in time, al-Mustanṣir not only acknowledged Sayyida Ḥurra's political leadership in Yemen but also accorded the Ṣulayḥid queen special religious authority over the Ismā'īlī communities of Yemen and Gujarāt. It is indeed within this general Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī milieu that the queen Sayyida's status and achievements can be better understood and evaluated in their historical context.

The earliest accounts of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty, the queen Sayyida's career, and the contemporary Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in Yemen are contained in the historical work of Najm al-Dīn 'Umāra b. 'Alī al-Ḥakamī,<sup>4</sup> the Yemenite historian and poet who emigrated to Egypt and was executed in Cairo in 569/1174 for his involvement in a plot to restore the Fāṭimids to power. Ismā'īlī historical writings on the Ṣulayḥids and on the contemporary Ismā'īlīs of Yemen are, as expected, rather meager. Our chief Ismā'īlī authority here is again the Yemenite Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468), who as the nineteenth chief *dā'ī* of the Ṭayyibī Ismā'īlī community was well-informed about the earlier history of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*. In the final, seventh volume of his comprehensive Ismā'īlī history entitled '*Uyūn al-akhbār*', which is still in manuscript form, Idrīs has detailed accounts of the Ṣulayḥids and the revitalization of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in Yemen under the queen Sayyida; here I have used a manuscript of this work from the collections of the Institute of Ismaili Studies Library.<sup>5</sup> In modern times, the best scholarly accounts of the Ṣulayḥids and the queen Sayyida as well as the early history of Ismā'īlism in Yemen have been produced by Ḥusain F. al-Ḥamdānī (1901–62), one of the pioneers of modern Ismā'īlī studies who based his work on a valuable collection of Ismā'īlī manuscripts preserved in his family.<sup>6</sup>

Yemen was one of the regions where the early Ismā'īlī *da'wa* achieved particular success. As a result of the activities of the *dā'īs* Ibn Ḥawshab Maṣṣūr al-Yaman and 'Alī b. al-Faḍl, the *da'wa* was preached openly in Yemen already in 270/883; and by 293/905–06, when Ibn al-Faḍl occupied Ṣan'ā', almost all of Yemen was controlled by the Ismā'īlīs. Later, the Ismā'īlīs lost the bulk of their conquered territories to the Zaydī imāms and other local dynasties of Yemen. With the death of Ibn Ḥawshab in 302/914 and the collapse of the Ismā'īlī state in Yemen, the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* continued there in a dormant fashion for over a century. From this obscure period in

the history of Yemenite Ismā'īlism, when the Yemenite *da'wa* continued to receive much secret support from different tribes, especially the Banū Hamdān, only the names of the Yemenite chief *dā'īs* have been preserved.<sup>7</sup>

By the time of the Fāṭimid caliph-imām al-Zāhir (411–27/1021–36), when Yemen was ruled by the Zaydīs, the Najāhids, and other local dynasties, the leadership of the Yemenite *da'wa* had come to be vested in the *dā'ī* Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Zawāhī, who was based in the mountainous region of Ḥarāz. Sulaymān chose as his successor 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayhī, the son of the *qādī* of Ḥarāz, and an important Hamdānī chief from the clan of Yām who had been the *dā'ī*'s assistant. In 429/1038, the *dā'ī* 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayhī rose in Masār, a locality in Ḥarāz where he had constructed fortifications, marking the foundation of the Ismā'īlī Ṣulayhid dynasty. With much support from the Hamdānī, Ḥimyarī and other Yemenite tribes, 'Alī b. Muḥammad soon started his rapid conquest of Yemen, and by 455/1063, he had subjugated all of Yemen. Recognizing the suzerainty of the Fāṭimid caliph-imām, 'Alī chose Ṣan'ā' as his capital and instituted the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī *khutba* throughout his dominions. The Ṣulayhids ruled over Yemen as vassals of the Fāṭimids for almost one century. Ṣulayhid rule was effectively terminated in 532/1138, on the death of the queen Sayyida, the most capable member of the dynasty.

'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayhī was married to his cousin Asmā bint Ṣhīhāb, a remarkable woman in her own right. Noted for her independent character, Asmā took an active part in the affairs of the state and also played an important role in the education of Sayyida Ḥurra, who was brought up under her care at the Ṣulayhid court. 'Alī al-Ṣulayhī fell victim to a tribal vendetta and was murdered by the Najāhids of Zabīd in 459/1067; he was succeeded by his son Aḥmad al-Mukarram (d. 477/1084), who received his investiture from the Fāṭimid caliph-imām al-Mustanṣir. The queen Asmā assisted her son Aḥmad, as she had assisted her husband, until her death in 467/1074. Thereafter, Aḥmad's wife, Sayyida Ḥurra, became the effective ruler of Ṣulayhid Yemen.

The queen [*al-malika*] al-Sayyida al-Ḥurra [the Noble Lady] al-Ṣulayhī, who evidently also carried the name Arwā, was born in 440/1048 (or less probably in 444/1052) in Ḥarāz. As noted, her early education was supervised by her future mother-in-law, Asmā,

who as a role model must have had great influence on Sayyida's character. Aḥmad al-Mukarram, who proved to be an incapable ruler, married Sayyida in 458/1066. The sources unanimously report that Sayyida was not only endowed with striking beauty, but was also noted for her courage, integrity, piety, and independent character as well as intelligence. In addition, she was a woman of high literary expertise. Almost immediately on Asmā's death, Sayyida consolidated the reins of the Ṣulayḥid state in her own hands and had her name mentioned in the *khutba* after that of the Fāṭimid caliph-imām al-Mustanṣir. Aḥmad al-Mukarram, who had been afflicted with facial paralysis resulting from war injuries, now retired completely from public life while remaining the nominal ruler of the Ṣulayḥid state. One of Sayyida's first acts was to transfer the seat of the Ṣulayḥid state from Ṣan'ā' to Dhū Jibla. She built a new palace there and transformed the old palace into a great mosque where she was eventually buried.

In the meantime, the foundation of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty had marked the initiation of a new, open phase in the activities of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in Yemen; and the reinvigoration of the Yemenite *da'wa* continued unabated in Sayyida's time under the close supervision of the Fāṭimid *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo. The founder of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty, 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayḥī, had been the head of the state [*dawla*] as well as the *da'wa*; he was at once the *malik* or sultan and the chief *dā'ī* of Yemen. Subsequently, this arrangement went through several phases, leading to an entirely independent status for the head of the *da'wa*.<sup>8</sup> In 454/1062, 'Alī sent Lamak b. Malik al-Ḥammādī, then chief *qāḍī* of Yemen, on a diplomatic mission to Cairo to prepare for his own visit there. For unknown reasons, however, 'Alī's visit to the Fāṭimid headquarters never materialized, and the *qāḍī* Lamak remained in Egypt for almost five years, staying with the Fāṭimid *dā'ī al-du'āt*, al-Mu'ayyad fī'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), at the Dār al-'Ilm, which then also served as the administrative headquarters of the Fāṭimid *da'wa*. Al-Mu'ayyad instructed Lamak in Ismā'īlī doctrines, as he had Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the renowned Ismā'īlī *dā'ī* and philosopher of Badakhshān, about a decade earlier. Lamak returned to Yemen with a valuable collection of Ismā'īlī texts soon after 'Alī al-Ṣulayḥī's murder in 459/1067, having now been appointed as the chief *dā'ī* of Yemen. Lamak, designated as *dā'ī al-balāgh*, henceforth acted as the executive head



of the Yemenite *da'wa*, while Aḥmad al-Mukarram succeeded his father merely as the head of state. The exceptionally close ties between the Ṣulayḥids and the Fāṭimids are well attested to by numerous letters and epistles [*sijillāt*] sent from the Fāṭimid chancery to the Ṣulayḥids 'Alī, Aḥmad, and Sayyida, mostly on the orders of al-Mustanṣir.<sup>9</sup>

It is a testimony to Sayyida Ḥurra's capabilities that, from the time of her assumption of effective political authority, she also came to play an increasingly important role in the affairs of the Yemenite *da'wa*, which culminated in her appointment as the *ḥujja* of Yemen by the Fāṭimid al-Mustanṣir shortly after the death of her husband in 477/1084. It is to be noted that in the Fāṭimid *da'wa* hierarchy, this rank was higher than that of the *dā'ī al-balāgh* accorded to Lamak.<sup>10</sup> In other words, Sayyida now held the highest rank in the Yemenite *da'wa*. More significantly, this represented the first application of the rank of *ḥujja*, or indeed any high rank in the Ismā'īlī hierarchy, to a woman; a truly unique event in the history of Ismā'īlism.

In the Fāṭimid *da'wa* organization, the non-Fāṭimid regions of the world were divided into twelve *jazīras*, or islands; each *jazīra*, representing a separate and independent region for the propagation of the *da'wa*, was placed under the jurisdiction of a high ranking *dā'ī* designated as *ḥujja*. Yemen does not appear among the known Fāṭimid lists of these *jazīras*.<sup>11</sup> However, it seems that the term *ḥujja* was also used in a more limited sense in reference to the highest Ismā'īlī dignitary of some particular regions; and it was in this sense that Sayyida was designated as the *ḥujja* of Yemen, much in the same way that her contemporary Fāṭimid *dā'ī* of the eastern Iranian lands, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, was known as the *ḥujja* of Khurāsān. At any event, the *ḥujja* was the highest representative of the *da'wa* in any particular region. In addition to the testimony of the *dā'ī* Idrīs, the Fāṭimid al-Mustanṣir's designation of Sayyida as the *ḥujja* of Yemen is corroborated by the contemporary Yemenite Ismā'īlī author al-Khaṭṭāb b. al-Ḥasan (d. 533/1138), who uses various arguments in support of this appointment and insists that even a woman could hold that rank.<sup>12</sup>

The queen Sayyida was also officially put in charge of the affairs of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in western India by the Fāṭimid caliph-imām al-Mustanṣir.<sup>13</sup> The Ṣulayḥids had evidently with the approval of

the Fāṭimid *da'wa* headquarters supervised the selection and dispatch of *dā'īs* to Gujarāt in western India. Sayyida now played a particularly crucial role in the Fāṭimids' renewed efforts in al-Mustanṣir's time to spread Ismā'ilism on the Indian subcontinent. As a result of these Ṣulayḥid efforts, a new Ismā'ilī community was founded in Gujarāt by the *dā'īs* sent from Yemen starting around 460/1067-68. The *da'wa* in western India maintained its close ties with Yemen in the time of the queen Sayyida; and the Ismā'ilī community founded there in the second half of the fifth/eleventh century evolved into the modern Ṭayyibī Bohra community. It should be added in passing that the extension of the Ismā'ilī *da'wa* in Yemen and Gujarāt in al-Mustanṣir's time may have been directly related to the development of new Fāṭimid commercial interests which necessitated the utilization of Yemen as a safe base along the Red Sea trade route to India.

It was also in Sayyida's time that the Nizārī-Musta'li schism of 487/1094 occurred in Ismā'ilism. This schism, revolving around al-Mustanṣir's succession, split the then unified Ismā'ilī community into two rival factions, the Musta'liyya, who recognized al-Mustanṣir's successor on the Fāṭimid throne, al-Musta'li, also as their imām; and the Nizāriyya, who upheld the rights of al-Mustanṣir's eldest son and original heir-designate, Nizār, who had been set aside by force through the machinations of the all-powerful Fāṭimid vizier al-Afḍal. After the failure of his brief revolt, Nizār himself was captured and murdered in Cairo in 488/1095.

Due to the close relations between Ṣulayḥid Yemen and Fāṭimid Egypt, the queen Sayyida recognized al-Musta'li as the legitimate imām after al-Mustanṣir. She, thus, retained her ties with Cairo and the *da'wa* headquarters there, which now served as the center of the Musta'lian *da'wa*. As a result of Sayyida's decision, the Ismā'ilī communities of Yemen and Gujarāt along with the bulk of the Ismā'ilīs of Egypt and Syria joined the Musta'lian camp without any dissent. By contrast, the Ismā'ilīs of the eastern lands, situated in the Saljūk dominions, who were then under the leadership of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/1124), championed the cause of Nizār and refused to recognize the Fāṭimid caliph al-Musta'li's imāmate. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, who had already been following an independent revolutionary policy from his mountain headquarters at Alamūt in northern Persia, completely severed his relations with Cairo; he had

now in fact founded the independent Nizārī *da'wa*, similarly to what the queen Sayyida was to do for the Musta'li-Ṭayyibī *da'wa* a few decades later.

The queen Sayyida remained close to the Fāṭimid al-Musta'li (487–95/1094–1101) and his successor al-Āmir (495–524/1101–30), who addressed her with several honorific titles.<sup>14</sup> Until his death in 515/1121, the vizier and commander of the armies, al-Afḍal, was however the effective ruler of Fāṭimid Egypt, also supervising the affairs of the Musta'lian *da'wa*. During this period, the Fāṭimid state had embarked on its rapid decline, which was accentuated by encounters with the Crusaders. Egypt was in fact invaded temporarily in 511/1117 by Baldwin I, king of the Latin state of Jerusalem. In Yemen, too, the Ṣulayḥid state had come under pressures from the Zaydīs and others, while several influential Yemenite tribal chiefs had challenged without much immediate success Sayyida's authority. In particular, the *qāḍī* 'Imrān, who had earlier supported the Ṣulayḥids, attempted to rally the various Hamdānī clans against her. In addition to resenting the authority of a female ruler, he also had his differences with the *dā'i* Lamak. As a result of these challenges, the Ṣulayḥids eventually lost Ṣan'ā' to a new Hamdānid dynasty supported by the family of the *qāḍī* 'Imrān. Meanwhile, Sayyida had continued to look after the affairs of the Yemenite *da'wa* with the collaboration of its executive head, Lamak; and on Lamak's death around 491/1098, his son Yaḥyā took administrative charge of the *da'wa* until his own death in 520/1126.

There are indications suggesting that during the final years of al-Afḍal's vizierate, relations deteriorated between the Ṣulayḥid queen and the Fāṭimid court. It was perhaps due to this fact that in 513/1119 Ibn Najīb al-Dawla was dispatched from Cairo to Yemen to bring the Ṣulayḥid state under greater control of the Fāṭimids. However, Ibn Najīb al-Dawla and his Armenian soldiers made themselves very unpopular in Yemen, and the queen attempted to get rid of him. In 519/1125, Ibn Najīb al-Dawla, whose Yemenite mission had been reconfirmed by al-Afḍal's successor, al-Ma'mūn, was recalled to Cairo, and was drowned on the return journey. By the final years of al-Āmir's rule, the queen Sayyida had developed a deep distrust of the Fāṭimids and was prepared to assert her independence from the Fāṭimid establishment. The opportunity for this decision came with the death of al-Āmir and the Ḥāfiẓī-

Ṭayyibī schism in Musta'lian Ismā'ilism. Meanwhile, on the death of the *dā'ī* Yaḥyā b. Lamak al-Ḥammādī in 520/1126, his assistant *dā'ī*, al-Dhu'ayb b. Mūsā al-Wādī'ī al-Ḥamdānī, became the executive head of the Yemenite *da'wa*. This appointment had received the prior approval of both the queen Sayyida and the *dā'ī* Yaḥyā.

Al-Āmir, the tenth Fāṭimid caliph and the twentieth imām of the Musta'lian Ismā'ilīs, was assassinated in Dhu'l-Qa'da 524/October 1130. Henceforth, the Fāṭimid caliphate embarked on its final phase of decline and collapse, marked by numerous dynastic, religious, political, and military crises, while a new schism further weakened the Musta'lian *da'wa*. According to the Musta'li-Ṭayyibī tradition, a son named al-Ṭayyib had been born to al-Āmir a few months before his death. This is supported by an epistle of al-Āmir sent by a certain Sharīf Muḥammad b. Ḥaydara to the Ṣulayḥid queen of Yemen, announcing the birth of Abū'l-Qāsim al-Ṭayyib in Rabi' II 524 AH.<sup>15</sup> The historical reality of al-Ṭayyib is also attested to by Ibn Muyassar (d. 677/1278),<sup>16</sup> and other historians. At any rate, al-Ṭayyib was immediately designated as al-Āmir's heir. On al-Āmir's death, however, power was assumed by his cousin, Abu'l-Maymūn 'Abd al-Majīd, who was later in 526/1132 proclaimed caliph and imām with the title al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn Allāh.

The proclamation of al-Ḥāfiẓ as caliph and imām caused a major schism in the Musta'lian community. In particular, his claim to the imāmate, even though he was not a direct descendant of the previous Musta'lian imām, received the support of the official *da'wa* organization in Cairo and the majority of the Musta'lian Ismā'ilīs of Egypt and Syria, who became known as the Ḥāfiẓiyya. The situation was quite different in Yemen. There, a bitter contest rooted in power politics ensued within the Musta'lian community. As a result, the Yemenite Ismā'ilīs, who had always been closely connected with the *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo, split into two factions. The Ṣulayḥid queen, who had already become disillusioned with Cairo, readily championed the cause of al-Ṭayyib, recognizing him as al-Āmir's successor to the imāmate. These Ismā'ilīs were initially known as the Āmiriyya, but subsequently, after the establishment of the independent Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in Yemen, they became designated as the Ṭayyibiyya. Sayyida now became the official leader of the Ṭayyibī faction in Yemen, severing her ties with Cairo, similarly to what

Ḥasan-i Şabbāḥ had done in Persia on al-Mustanşir's death in 487/1094. Sayyida's decision was fully endorsed by the *dā'ī* al-Dhu'ayb, the administrative head of the Yemenite *da'wa*. By contrast, the Zuray'ids of 'Adan and some of the Hamdānids of Şan'ā', who had won their independence from the Şulayḥids, now supported Ḥāfiẓī Ismā'īlism, recognizing al-Ḥāfiẓ and later Fāṭimid caliphs as their imāms. Ḥāfiẓī Ismā'īlism, tied to the Fāṭimid regime, disappeared soon after the collapse of the Fāṭimid dynasty in 567/1171 and the Ayyūbid invasion of southern Arabia in 569/1173. But the Ṭayyibī *da'wa*, initiated by Sayyida, survived in Yemen with its headquarters remaining in Ḥarāz. Due to the close ties between Şulayḥid Yemen and Gujarāt, the Ṭayyibī cause was also upheld in western India, which was eventually to account for the bulk of the Ṭayyibī Ismā'īlīs, known there as Bohras.

Nothing is known about the fate of al-Ṭayyib, who seems to have been murdered in his infancy on al-Ḥāfiẓ's order. It is, however, the belief of the Ṭayyibīs that al-Ṭayyib survived and went into concealment; and that the imāmate subsequently continued secretly in his progeny, being handed down from father to son, during the current period of *satr* [concealment] initiated by al-Ṭayyib's own concealment. The news of al-Ṭayyib's birth was a source of rejoicing at the Şulayḥid court. For this event, we also have the eyewitness report of al-Khaṭṭāb, who was then assistant to the *dā'ī* al-Dhu'ayb.<sup>17</sup> From that time until her death, the aged Şulayḥid queen made every effort to consolidate the Yemenite *da'wa* on behalf of al-Ṭayyib; and al-Dhu'ayb and other leaders of the *da'wa* in Şulayḥid Yemen, henceforth called *al-da'wa al-Ṭayyibiyya*, collaborated closely with Sayyida. It was soon after 526/1132 that Sayyida declared al-Dhu'ayb as *al-dā'ī al-muṭlaq*, or *dā'ī* with absolute authority. Having earlier broken her relations with Fāṭimid Egypt, by this measure she also made the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* independent of the Şulayḥid state, a wise measure that was to ensure the survival of Ṭayyibī Ismā'īlism after the downfall of the Şulayḥid state. The *dā'ī muṭlaq* was now in fact empowered to conduct the *da'wa* activities on behalf of the hidden Ṭayyibī imām. This marked the foundation of the independent Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in Yemen under the leadership of a *dā'ī muṭlaq*, a title retained by al-Dhu'ayb's successors.<sup>18</sup> The *dā'ī* al-Dhu'ayb thus became the first of the absolute *dā'īs*, who have followed one another during the current period of *satr* in the history of Ṭayyibī Ismā'īlism.

As noted, al-Dhu'ayb was initially assisted by al-Khaṭṭāb b. al-Ḥasan, who belonged to a family of the chiefs of al-Ḥajūr, another Hamdānī clan. An important Ismā'īlī author and Yemenite poet, al-Khaṭṭāb himself was the Ḥajūrī sultan who fought as a brave warrior on behalf of the Ṣulayḥid queen. His loyalty to Sayyida Ḥurra and his military services to the Ismā'īlī cause contributed significantly to the success of the early Ṭayyibī da'wa in difficult times. Al-Khaṭṭāb was killed in 533/1138, a year after the queen had died. On al-Khaṭṭāb's death, al-Dhu'ayb designated Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī, belonging to the Ḥāmidī clan of the Banū Hamdān, as his new assistant; and on al-Dhu'ayb's death in 546/1151, Ibrāhīm (d. 557/1162) succeeded to the headship of the Ṭayyibī da'wa as the second *dā'ī muṭlaq*. Al-Dhu'ayb, al-Khaṭṭāb, and Ibrāhīm were in fact the earliest leaders of the Ṭayyibī da'wa who, under the supreme guidance and patronage of Sayyida, consolidated this branch of Ismā'īlism in Yemen. The Ṭayyibī da'wa had now become completely independent of both the Fāṭimid regime and the Ṣulayḥid state, and this explains why it survived the fall of both dynasties and managed in subsequent centuries, without any political support, to spread successfully in Yemen and western India. That the minoritarian Musta'li-Ṭayyibī community of the Ismā'īlis exists at all today is indeed mainly due to the foresight and leadership of Sayyida Ḥurra, much in the same way that the survival of the majoritarian Ismā'īlī community of the Nizārīs may be attributed in no small measure to the success of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in founding the independent Nizārī da'wa, while in both instances the imāms themselves had remained inaccessible to their followers.

The Malika Sayyida Ḥurra bint Aḥmad al-Ṣulayḥī died in 532/1138, after a long and eventful rule. Her death marked the effective end of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty, which held on to some scattered fortresses in Yemen for a few decades longer. A most capable ruler, Sayyida occupies a unique place in the annals of Ismā'īlism, not only because she was the sole woman to occupy the highest ranks of the Ismā'īlī da'wa hierarchy and to lead the Yemenite da'wa in turbulent times, but more significantly because she in effect was largely responsible for the founding of the independent Musta'li-Ṭayyibī da'wa, which still has followers in Yemen, India, Pakistan, and elsewhere. It should also be noted here that the Ṭayyibī Ismā'īlis have been responsible for preserving a large portion of the Ismā'īlī

texts produced during the Fāṭimid period, and the preservation of this Ismā'īlī literature too may be attributed largely to Sayyida's foresight. The queen Sayyida's devotion to Ismā'īlism and the cause of al-Ṭayyib found its final expression in her will in which she bequeathed her renowned collection of jewellery to Imām al-Ṭayyib.<sup>19</sup>

This remarkable Ismā'īlī Ṣulayḥid woman of the medieval Islamic world was buried in the mosque of Dhū Jibla that she had erected herself. And throughout the centuries, Sayyida's grave has served as a place of pilgrimage for Muslims of diverse communities; the pilgrims not always being aware of her Ismā'īlī Shī'ī connection. Various attempts were made in medieval times by Zaydīs and other enemies of the Ismā'īlīs in Yemen to destroy the mosque of Dhū Jibla; but Sayyida Ḥurra's tomb chamber, inscribed with Qur'ānic verses, remained intact until it, too, was damaged in September 1993 by members of a local group who considered the established practice of visiting it to be heretical.<sup>20</sup>

#### NOTES

1. See Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan, *'Uyūn al-akḥbār wa-funūn al-āḥbār*, ed. M. Ghālib (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1973–78), vol. 5, pp. 137–38, reprinted in S.M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism* (Jerusalem–Leiden: The Magnes Press, 1983), pp. 102–103.

2. Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawā'iz wa'l-i'tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āḥbār* (Būlāq, 1270/1853–54), vol. 1, pp. 390–91, and vol. 2, pp. 341–42. See also H. Halm, "The Ismā'īlī Oath of Allegiance (*'ahd*) and the 'Sessions of Wisdom' (*majālis al-ḥikma*) in Fatimid Times," in *Mediaeval Ismā'īlī History and Thought*, ed. F. Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially pp. 98–112, and H. Halm, *The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 41–56.

3. See Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzhat al-muqlatayn fī akḥbār al-dawlatayn*, ed. A. Fu'ād Sayyid (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1992), pp. 110–12, and S.M. Stern "Cairo as the Centre of the Ismā'īlī Movement," in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo: Ministry of Culture, 1972), p. 441, reprinted in Stern, *Studies*, pp. 242–43.

4. 'Umāra b. 'Alī al-Ḥakamī, *Ta'rikḥ al-Yaman*, ed. and trans. Henry C. Kay, in his *Yaman, its Early Mediaeval History* (London: E. Arnold, 1892), text pp. 1–102, translation pp. 1–137; more recently, this history has been edited by Ḥasan S. Maḥmūd (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1957).

5. See Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn, *'Uyūn al-akḥbār*, vol. 7, Arabic manuscript 230, The Institute of Ismaili Studies Library, London, containing the

history of the Ṣulayḥids on fols. 1–222, with fols. 117v–222v devoted to Sayyida Ḥurra. See A. Gacek, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies* (London: Islamic Publications, 1984–85), vol. 1, pp. 136–40.

6. In this article I have drawn on the following works by Ḥ.F. al-Hamdānī: “The Doctrines and History of the Ismā‘īlī *Da‘wat* in Yemen,” (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1931), especially pp. 27–47; “The Life and Times of Queen Saiyidah Arwa the Sulaihid of the Yemen,” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 18 (1931): 505–17, and *al-Ṣulayḥiyyūn wa’l-ḥaraka al-Fāṭimiyya fi’l-Yaman* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1955), especially pp. 141–211, which is still the best modern study on the subject. Some recent publications on Sayyida Ḥurra, including L. al-Imad’s “Women and Religion in the Fatimid Caliphate: The Case of al-Sayyida al-Hurra, Queen of Yemen,” in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. M.M. Mazzaoui and V.B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), pp. 137–44, and Fatima Mernissi’s *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, trans. M.J. Lakeland (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 139–58, provide new perspectives without adding significant details to al-Hamdānī’s studies. See also F. Krenkow, s.v. “Ṣulaiḥī,” EI(1), ed. M.Th. Houtsma, et al. (Leiden-London: E.J. Brill, 1913–38), vol. 4, pp. 515–17; M. Ghālib, *A’lām al-Ismā‘īliyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Yaqzā, 1964), pp. 143–53; Ḳhayr al-Dīn al-Zarkalī, *al-A’lām*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Ḳhayr al-Dīn al-Zarkalī, 1969), vol. 1, p. 279, and ‘Umar R. Kaḥḥāla, *A’lām al-nisā’*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Mu’asisat al-Risāla, 1977), vol. 1, pp. 253–54.

7. See Idris, *‘Uyūn al-akḥbār*, vol. 5, pp. 31–44; Ibn Mālik al-Yamānī, *Kaṣḥf asrār al-Bāṭiniyya wa-akḥbār al-Qarāmiṭa*, ed. M.Z. al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Anwār, 1939), pp. 39–42, written by a Yemenite Sunnī jurist who lived at the time of the founder of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty; he later became an Ismā‘īlī but then abjured and produced this anti-Ismā‘īlī treatise which is also reproduced in *Akḥbār al-Qarāmiṭa*, ed. S. Zakkār, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dār Ḥissān, 1982), pp. 243–48. Ibn Mālik’s work evidently served as the primary source on the early Ismā‘īlī *da‘wa* in Yemen for all subsequent Sunnī historians of Yemen, including Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Janādī (d. 732/1332), who reproduces Ibn Mālik’s list of the Yemenite *dā‘īs* in his *Akḥbār al-Qarāmiṭa bi’l-Yaman*, ed. and trans. Kay, in his *Yaman*, text pp. 150–52, translation pp. 208–12. See also al-Hamdānī, *al-Ṣulayḥiyyūn*, pp. 49–61.

8. A. Hamdani, “The Dā‘ī Ḥātim Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī [d. 596 H/1199 AD] and his Book *Tuḥfat al-Qulūb*,” *Oriens* 23–24 (1970–71): especially 270–79.

9. See Abū Tamīm Ma‘add al-Mustanṣir bi’llāh, *al-Sijillāt al-Mustanṣiriyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Mājid (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1954), and Ḥ.F. al-Hamdānī, “The Letters of al-Mustanṣir bi’llāh,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies* 7 (1934): 307–24, describing the contents of the letters.



10. F. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 227ff.

11. See al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān b. Muḥammad, *Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im*, ed. M. H. al-A'zamī (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1967–72), vol. 2, p. 74, and vol. 3, pp. 48–49; Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, *Iḥbāt al-nubuwwāt*, ed. 'Ārif Tāmīr (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Kathulikiyya, 1966), p. 172; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. J. H. Kramers, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1938–39), p. 310, and Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 228–29.

12. Al-Khaṭṭāb b. al-Ḥasan, *Ghāyat al-mawālīd*, Arabic manuscript 249, The Institute of Ismaili Studies Library, London, fols. 4r–8r; see Gacek, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, p. 21. See also I.K. Poonawala, *al-Sulṭān al-Khaṭṭāb* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1967), pp. 78–80, and S.M. Stern, "The Succession to the Fāṭimid Imam al-Āmir, the Claims of the Later Fāṭimids to the Imamate, and the Rise of Ṭayyibī Ismailism," *Oriens*, 4 (1951): 221, 227–28, reprinted in S.M. Stern, *History and Culture in the Medieval Muslim World* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), article XI.

13. Al-Mustanṣir, *al-Sijillāt*, pp. 167–69, 203–206, and al-Hamdānī, "Letters," pp. 321–24.

14. See al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, ed. J. al-Shayyāl and M.Ḥ.M. Aḥmad (Cairo, 1967–73), vol. 3, p. 103.

15. This *sijill* is preserved in the seventh volume of the '*Uyūn al-akḥbār* of the *dā'ī* Idrīs and in other Ṭayyibī sources; it is also quoted in 'Umāra, *Ta'rikḥ*, text pp. 100–102, translation pp. 135–36. See also Stern, "Succession," p. 194ff., and al-Hamdānī, *al-Ṣulayḥiyyūn*, pp. 183–84, 321–22.

16. Ibn Muyassar, *Akḥbār Miṣr*, ed. A. Fu'ād Ṣayyid (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1981), pp. 109–110.

17. The relevant passage from al-Khaṭṭāb's *Ghāyat al-mawālīd* is also contained in W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Tradition Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* (London: H. Milford for the Islamic Research Association, 1942), pp. 37–38; English translation in Stern, "Succession," pp. 223–24.

18. The earliest history of the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in Yemen is related by the *dā'ī* Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm in his unpublished *Tuḥfat al-qulūb*. The *dā'ī* Idrīs has biographical accounts of al-Dḥu'ayb and his successors in his unpublished '*Uyūn al-akḥbār*, vol. 7, and *Nuzhat al-afkār*. See also Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, p. 285ff.

19. Sayyida's testament, containing a detailed description of her collection of jewels, has been preserved by Idrīs in his '*Uyūn al-akḥbār*, vol. 7, reproduced in al-Hamdānī, *al-Ṣulayḥiyyūn*, pp. 323–30.

20. I owe this information to Tim Mackintosh-Smith, a long-time resident of Yemen.

WOMEN'S LAMENTATIONS  
AS PROTEST IN THE 'SHĀHNĀMA'

*Olga M. Davidson*

*The 'quotation' in a Persian epic of a woman's lament matches 'real-life' women's laments described by anthropologists who observe this genre as a living tradition.*

The social institutions of lament can be defined as the expression—by singing—of grief over the death of someone—or over other such misfortunes. There are many different forms of lament in many different societies, but there is one salient characteristic shared by most of them: lament tends to be gender-specific, so that in some societies only women sing laments while in others they sing laments that are distinct in form or style from those of men.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to trace the traditions of women's lament in the written evidence of the medieval Islamic world, especially since the Prophet is quoted as having singled out 'lamenting the dead' (*al-niyāh a 'alā 'l-mayyit*) as one of the three pre-Islamic customs that had to be abandoned by Muslims (the other two being 'invoking the planets to get rain' and 'attacking genealogies').<sup>2</sup> Still, there is clear evidence from medieval Iran of lamentation, in the form of "quoted" laments within the monumental Persian epic known as the *Book of Kings* or *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī (completed around the beginning of the eleventh century AD). This paper will concentrate on one such lament, uttered by Tahmīna on the occasion of the killing of her son Suhrāb by Rustam.<sup>3</sup>

It may be objected that such a lament is a mere representation of a lament, not a 'real' one: after all, it is being uttered by a character inside an epic poem. How can we trust the words that a poet puts into the mouth of a character from the remote heroic past of Iran? And yet, I will argue that both the form and the content of what

Tahmīna is quoted as saying correspond closely to what is found in 'real' women's laments observed by ethnographers in a wide variety of societies where traditional customs like lamentation have survived to this day. A distinctive feature of such real women's laments is the element of gender-specific *protest*—against one's misfortune in particular *as a woman* and against one's destiny in general *as a woman*.<sup>4</sup>

To express an emotion like grief by way of song does not make it any less an emotion, if we accept the anthropological argument that emotion is culturally constructed.<sup>5</sup> It can even be shown, on the basis of ethnographic observation, that a given lament's combination of singing and grieving can expand and enhance the actual experience of grief.<sup>6</sup> Thus the performance of a lament is a matter of poetics, and I will argue that the poetics of Firdawsī's epic *require* the poet to observe the internal poetics of the laments that he represents. When Tahmīna expresses her grief and anger over the death of her son Suhrāb at the hands of his own father Rustam, the words that epic chooses to express her emotions are not just poetic words: they are the performance of a lament framed within the performance of the epic *Shāhnāma*.<sup>7</sup> The poetics of protest inherent in Tahmīna's lament are thus safely framed within the overall poetics of kingly and heroic legitimation inherent in the overarching narrative of Firdawsī's *Book of Kings*.<sup>8</sup>

For a close analogy, we may compare the framing of women's laments in the ancient Greek epic tradition, in particular the Homeric *Iliad* as analyzed by Richard P. Martin.<sup>9</sup> For the study of oral poetics in general, Martin suggests that "we abandon the notion of 'genre' as a literary term and train ourselves in the anthropologist's working methods."<sup>10</sup> As Martin argues, the outer narrative of the *Iliad*, 'quoting' the embedded speeches of characters in the narrative, is really representing the performance of oral genres. Such 'embedded genres' include lament, prayer, supplication, commanding, praising, insulting, and narrating from memory. Martin has demonstrated "the usefulness of considering every speech within the poem [the *Iliad*] a composition in its own right, a poem within epic, subject to conventions of discourse."<sup>11</sup> Thus the 'quoted' speeches of characters in the *Iliad* "are in fact stylized versions of pre-existing, already stylized verbal art forms such as lamenting, rebuking, boasting"; in short, "the *Iliad* itself consists of various 'genres' within epic."<sup>12</sup>

The oral poet can “recollect the way contemporary men and women speak,” since “the diction of such embedded genres is most likely inherited and traditional; the rhetoric, on the other hand, is the locus of spontaneous composition in performance.”<sup>13</sup> When we consider “the way in which the heroes speak to one another” we discover that they are “performing to fit the audience.”<sup>14</sup> For example, the *Iliad* shows both Helen and Hekabe as “actually enacting laments,” and they are “fulfilling an expected performance role, using a recognized genre...to create dramatic effect.”<sup>15</sup> But the dramatic effect of the framed performance can be achieved only if the drama of the framing narrative is a performance in its own right: “any tale in oral tradition...makes sense only in performance.”<sup>16</sup>

For Tahmīna’s lament in the *Shāhnāma* to ‘make sense’ as a woman’s protest, it has to have both an interior intent, as a speech-act of and by itself, and an exterior intent, as a component of the larger speech-act that is the whole performance/composition of the *Book of Kings*.<sup>17</sup> In order to attempt a reconstruction of the interior intent, we must first look for various kinds of protest rhetoric as we find it in the real laments of real women in living traditions described by ethnographers.

Among the typologies that are available for study, perhaps the most useful is the evidence of Modern Greek lament traditions as studied by Loring Danforth,<sup>18</sup> Anna Caraveli,<sup>19</sup> Nadia Seremetakis,<sup>20</sup> and Michael Herzfeld.<sup>21</sup> There are also important contributions by classicists and literary critics, most notably those of Margaret Alexiou<sup>23</sup> and Gail Holst-Warhaft.<sup>23</sup>

It is in fact from the title of Caraveli’s work that I derive the word ‘protest’ in the title of my work here. Her study “has proved particularly effective in showing how laments may permit the subversion of authoritative orders, not through direct, frontal rhetoric but through challenges to normative articulacy.”<sup>24</sup> As for Seremetakis, she argues that women’s performance of ritual lament “publicly resists those male-dominated institutions and discourses that fragment the female practice and devalue the social status of women’s labor.”<sup>25</sup> By implication, such ‘resistance’ would express discontent not only with the laments’ here and now but also with male-centered traditions in general.

Still, as Herzfeld cautions, there are limits to the pursuit of this line of thinking: “A search for ‘the’ meaning of these texts...hardly

improves on survivalist and nationalist dreams of finding 'the' origins, or on teleological analyses of 'the' functions, of such phenomena."<sup>26</sup> He goes on to ask the basic question: do laments really change anything?<sup>27</sup>

Referring to one particular lament that he collected in Crete as the 'key text' for his interpretation, Herzfeld shows how this song, performed by a young woman mourning the death of her elderly father, "bewails loss and destruction [here he has just given us a minimalist definition of lament],...but may also have initiated a process that allowed a young woman to redress her low social status."<sup>28</sup> Herzfeld's point is that the words of the given young woman who is recorded in his case study as lamenting the death of her father cannot be understood without taking into consideration not only the short-term but also the long-term effects that her lament had produced for the community that had heard her.

Herzfeld stresses the 'indeterminacy' of performance, which helps explain "...why some events seem significant in hindsight even when at the time they may not have seemed significant at all."<sup>29</sup> In other words, performance creates meaning for the composition.

The lamenting woman whom Herzfeld recorded "did not resign herself to what others regarded as her 'fate' but rather, through her lament and subsequent actions, she took control over her 'fate'."<sup>30</sup> In Modern Greek, in fact, the word for 'lament' is *mirolòyi*, meaning 'words about fate.'

The idea of 'managing fate,' Herzfeld argues, is a paradox only if we take 'fate' at face value. Herzfeld explains it this way: when society blames the grieving person for his or her misfortune, with the attitude that it must have been brought on because of some moral flaw, then the grieving person can say that the misfortune was fated to be and there was nothing that could be done to prevent it: "The logic of fate and personality is clear: my failures and your successes are just a matter of luck, whereas my successes and your failures are proof of radical differences in 'character'."<sup>31</sup> The inherent ambiguity, Herzfeld concludes, leaves open the possibility of future action.

Paradoxically, then, the more the lamenter blames fate and her inability to control fate, the more she takes her own fate into her own hands—in the eyes of those who hear her lament. Further, the more she involves others in her grief, the more power she has to protest her own fate. In order to achieve the fullest possible range

of grief, the lamenter must make the view of her grief as public as possible. For example, in Modern Greek traditions a mother who has lost her son can most effectively achieve "the public view of personal disaster" by linking the passion of Christ with the death of her son: if a lamenting person can "evoke a sufficiently rich image of collective suffering, she will move others to tears because she has recast individual as common experience, her personal pain as a shared past and present."<sup>32</sup>

With these analogies in mind, let us proceed to a close reading of the passage from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* 'quoting' the lament of Tahmīna. She mourns the death of her son, Suhrāb, who has just been killed in battle by his own father, Rustam. The following is a brief outline of the events that lead up to this tragic end:

Rustam goes on a hunting expedition completely alone (with the exception of his horse, Rakhsh) outside of Iran, into the Turanian wildland. After a large, solitary meal, he falls asleep, having let Rakhsh roam free without his bridle. Some Turkomans, seeing that Rustam is off his guard, use this opportunity to steal Rakhsh. When Rustam wakes up and finds that Rakhsh has disappeared, he is devastated. He goes to the city, Samangān, to find his horse and is invited by the King to stay with a promise of help. The king's daughter, Tahmīna, comes to him in the middle of the night and tells him that if he were to impregnate her she would get him back his horse. Rustam accepts her proposition and then, the next day, when they part, he gives her an armband with the instructions that, should she bear a son, she is to put this armband on the child so that his father could recognize him. A son is born and is named Suhrāb. He shares the same early characteristics that his father had, looking a year old when he is only a month old, using weapons when he is only three, and other such traits that distinguish him as special. When he learns from his mother who his father is, he leaves Turan, with a Turanian host, to find Rustam. He sets out on his search for his father with the intention that once he has found Rustam, the two of them could then overthrow the *Shāh*, Kay Kā'ūs, and put Rustam on the Iranian throne and overthrow the ruler of Turān, Afrāsiyāb, and put Suhrāb on the Turanian throne. Father and son would then rule the world, in a manner of speaking, being such a powerful, combined force. Consequently, as he sets out to find his father he also sets out to invade Iran.

Afrāsiyāb, the king of Turān and enemy of Iran, is willing to have Suhrāb invade Iran because he hopes that, once pitted against his father, Suhrāb would overcome him, thereby leaving Iran completely

defenseless, having lost its *pahlavān-e jehān*.<sup>33</sup> He plots that even if Rustam should kill Suhrāb, instead of the other way around, the guilt of filicide would consume him for the rest of his days. In this scheme, Suhrāb must never recognize his father or else he will not fight him.

As Suhrāb invades Iran, he wreaks havoc on the outskirts, fighting the "amazon," Gordafriid, and wasting her territory. The Iranian throne panics and summons Rustam to help in this state of emergency. Rustam does not take any threat from Turan seriously, and he does not immediately obey the *Shāh*'s command, but feasts drunkenly for three days instead. When he finally does come as summoned, the *Shāh*, because of his delay, is furious with him and publicly dishonors him. Rustam withdraws in anger but, fearful of being accused of cowardice, he eventually agrees to fight Suhrāb, not knowing, however, that Suhrāb is his own son. Before the two meet for a one-on-one confrontation, Suhrāb terrorizes the Iranian host, forcing it to scatter and causing chaos. They then fight, first with weapons, then by wrestling, but draw apart when evening comes. On the second day, Suhrāb overpowers Rustam in a wrestling match and is about to finish him off when Rustam tricks him by telling him that it is Iranian tradition that one has to defeat the opponent twice before one can take his head. Suhrāb accepts this lie and runs off after an antelope. Rustam meanwhile, exhausted, asks *khodā* or 'God' to give him back his former strength, for he used to have such density that his feet would sink into rocks. Finally, on the third day, having tricked Suhrāb out of his victory, Rustam kills Suhrāb, only to learn afterwards the sad truth about his identity. Overcome with grief, he asks Kay Kā'ūs to restore his son's life, but Kay Kā'ūs refuses on grounds that two such outstanding champions might be a threat to the throne.

What follows is my translation of Tahmīna's lament, segmented here into a series of stages, with commentary attached to each stage:<sup>34</sup>

كجائى سرشته بخاك اندرون  
 بيابم زفرزند و رستم خبر  
 بگشتى بگرد جهان اندرون  
 كنون بآمدن تيز بشتافتى

همي گفت كه اي جان مادر كنون  
 چو چشم بره بود گفتم مگر  
 گمانم چنان بود گفتم كنون  
 پدر را همي جستي و يافتى

She said continuously: 'O soul of your mother  
 Where are you now? Mingled with the dust?'

When my eyes were fixed on the road I said  
 'Perhaps I will learn news of my child and Rustam.'

My *gomān* ['fancy' or 'suspicion'] was thus, and I said:  
 'Now you are wandering around the world  
 Searching continuously and finding your father  
 you now hasten quickly to return.'

Tahmīna both denies and accepts the death of her son. This ambiguity between angry denial and abject resignation corresponds to an ambiguous self-characterization. She speaks with the voice of a woman of all ages of life, be it a young bride who has just become mother of a first-born or be it a bitter old widow who has known all along the cruelty of a world where men are fated to wage war. The universalized image of the grieving woman enhances the rhetoric of 'the public view of personal disaster.'

Tahmīna simultaneously plays two roles: she is the trusting, but dumbfounded, mother who cannot believe what has happened—yet she has suspected the truth all along. In denial, she addresses her lament to her son as if he were alive. She begins by asking him where he is. She then tells him that she has anxiously been waiting for him, expecting at least to hear about him. She depicts herself as any mother who is expecting her child's return home, reassuring herself that she will soon learn of his whereabouts. She then says that it was her *gomān*, which can be interpreted positively as 'imagination' or 'fancy' and negatively as 'suspicion,' that Suhrāb, having departed in search of his father, is now hastening homewards. She is both imagining his coming home so that they can have a joyful reunion and recognizing that such a reunion is going to be only in her imagination, never in reality. Joyful expectation and the sad shattering of that expectation combine as one feeling.

Tahmīna is like a sentinel, looking out to see what is coming down the road, picturing herself as expecting something that will never happen: the sight of her son coming home with his father, her husband. This image, of course, matches her vision of her son, who is in turn pictured as a sentinel, on the lookout, seeking his father throughout the world. This double sentinel duty of mother and son, with her staying ever on the lookout, with her eyes fixed on the road, while he keeps scanning the world, looking for his father, underscores the interplay of naive expectations and harsh reality—just as it turns reality and expectation upside down, inside out. If it is just her imagination that Suhrāb is out looking for his father, then the reality is that not only did he search for his father



but he found him. Yet what she so confidently says she expects, news about Suhrāb and Rustam, perhaps even seeing the two of them coming home to her together, is a shattered hope. The shift from her 'fancy' back to the reality of what is at hand sets the audience up for the next stage of her lament:

چو دانستم ای پور که آید خبر      که رستم دریدن بخنجر جگر

How could I know, Oh son, when the news came  
that Rustam would pierce your liver with his dagger?

She now gets straight to the point, mincing no words. This is not only the last thing she expected, but she sees no reason why she should have expected it in the first place. The abrupt switch—from her almost disbelieving that Suhrāb is really dead and her not even mentioning his father's hand in the son's death—to her furious and irrefutable statement of fact, cloaked in a rhetorical question, speaks in the voice not only of any woman of any age but also of any man. What man, in his right mind, would deliberately kill his own child? Surely such a man is not human:

دریغش نیآمد بر آن روی تو      بر آن برز بالا و آن مویتو  
بر آن گردگاهش نیآمد دریغ      که بدرید رستم مرانرا بتیغ

Didn't he have regrets, sorrow or pity [*dorigh*] when he  
saw your face,  
your tall stature and hair?

Had he no pity upon your middle *gerdgāh*  
—that very thing which Rustam lacerated with his  
sword?

As Tahmīna continues to express her misery at this outrage, she plays up the difference between her humanity and Rustam's lack of it by pointing out how the father failed to recognize in his son what *she* as mother knew so intimately. Tahmīna expresses such pride as she describes her son, whom she reared into early manhood, with the intimate detail of his hair, something that would not be seen by all, especially in battle, since Suhrāb would then be wearing a helmet. By mentioning his hair and then moving on to his *gerdgāh*, which means not only 'middle' but also 'navel,' she emphasizes her own attachment to Suhrāb, because only she as mother, and she alone,

was once physically connected to Suhrāb, as she nourished him *in utero*. Her lament now turns to the audience, asking them how they could expect such a savage as Rustam to act otherwise. Rustam has only seen Suhrāb once in his life and that was in battle. She furthers her case with the image of Rustam tearing out Suhrāb's *gerdgāh*. By ripping apart where the umbilical cord of Suhrāb once had been, that very means through which the mother had nourished the child when he was in her womb, the father Rustam has shown himself to be as viciously non-nurturing as the mother Tahmīna is nurturing. He is the antithesis of what she is. She is Suhrāb's generator, Rustam is his destroyer.

ببر بر بروز و شبان دراز	بپرورده بودم تنت را بناز
کفن بربرویال تو خرقة گشت	کنون آن بخون اندرون غرقه گشت
که باشد همی مرمرها غمگسار	کنون من کرا گیرم اندر کنار
کرا گویم این درد و تیمار جویش	کرا خوانم اکنون بجای تو پیش

I had nursed your body with tenderness  
holding you to my breast during the long days and  
nights.

Now it is drowning in blood  
a shroud has become the tattered garment covering your  
breast and shoulder.

Whom now can I draw to my side?  
Who will forever be my confidant [*ghramgosār*]?

Whom now can I summon in your place?  
To whom can I tell my personal pain and sorrow?

Tahmīna now shifts the attention away from Rustam and back to Suhrāb as she once again addresses him directly. She recollects her role as a young mother, cherishing the body, her nursling, and then bitterly declares that all her care was for nothing. She also contrasts her protective and continuous caring for her child with his present defenseless and sunken condition. Although Rustam is to blame for Suhrāb's destruction, Tahmīna now blames her own son, not her husband. By dying Suhrāb has abandoned her.<sup>35</sup> He has squandered her care. Now she is alone and has nobody. As she accuses Suhrāb of abandoning her when she asks him whom can

she hold in her arms, who will be her *ghramgosār*, or confidant, who will sit next to her, and to whom will she tell about her pain and her sorrow, she is also blaming him for not bringing Rustam back to her to fulfill his role *as a husband*. Rustam should be the one to fulfill the role of a confidant to Tahmīna—someone to fill her aching, lonely arms. She addresses her son as if he were a lover who had abandoned her. He was everything to her and she had given her life to him. How *dare* he leave her?

بخاک اندرون مانده از کاخ و باغ

بجای پدر گورت آمد براه

بجفتی بخاک اندرون زاروار

دریغاتن و خان و چشم و چراغ

پدر جستی ای شیر لشکر پناه

از امید نومید گشتی بزار

Alas for his body and soul, eyes and light  
All stay in the dust, away from the palace and garden

You searched for your father, oh lion, oh army protector,  
in place of your father, you came upon your tomb.

With affliction you pass from hope to despair,  
you are miserably bent into the earth.

As she bewails his body, the very body that she had nurtured and that Rustam had failed to appreciate, she also bewails that his body now lies in the dust, not in the splendor to which it is entitled. The timbre is more general, and can apply to any young man, cut down in his prime, thereby inviting the audience to think beyond Suhrāb and about others in a similar plight. The awful truth peculiar to this story, that Suhrāb did actually find what he was looking for (his father)—and look what that got him (a dagger in the liver from his own father's hand)—is reshaped to look like a failed quest that ended with the hero's death. Her addressing him as a mighty warrior who found his death instead of his quest makes her personal loss everyone's loss. He has turned from hope to hopeless despair (*zār* meaning lamentation as well) since he is sleeping in the dust, enveloped by a lamentable condition (*zār wār*). So too the audience is now completely enveloped by despair and grief.

از آن پیش کو دشنه را برکشید	جگرگاه سیمین تو بر درید
چرا آن نشانی که مادرت داد	ندادی بدو و نکردیش یاد
نشان داده بود از پدر مادرت	زبهر چه نآمد همی باورت
کنون مبادرت مانند بی تو اسیر	پراز رنج و تیمار و درد و زخیر
چرا نآمدم با تو اندر سفر	که گشتی بکام دلت ماه و جور
مرا رستم از دور بشناختی	ترا با من ای پور بنواختی
نینداختی نیزه نزدت فراز	نکردی جگرگ ای پور باز

Before that one who drew forth his dagger  
and sliced your silvery abdomen.

Why did you not show him that sign which  
your mother had given you? Why didn't you make him  
mindful?

Your mother had given you a sign from your father  
Why didn't you ever believe her?

Now your mother will remain a prisoner without you,  
full of suffering and grief, pain and aches in the belly.

Why didn't I fare along with you  
when you turned to your heart's desire, the moon and the  
sun?

Rustam would have recognized me from afar,  
(if you were) with me, oh son, he would have treated you  
humanely.

He would not have pitched his javelin at you,  
he would not have demolished your bowels, oh my son.

She concludes her lament by shifting inward again, away from public sympathy and away from public outrage to scolding her son for not doing as she had advised. She blames him for his death and blames him further for causing her such misery. Her temper is that of a mother scolding her child for being disobedient and then pointing out the consequences of his irresponsible behavior. Now his death is his own fault because he could have prevented it if he had only listened to her. Finally, having blamed him, she blames herself. As any mother after the death of her child, she blames herself for not preventing it, even if there was nothing she could do about

it. If only she had gone with him, then nothing would have happened to him. She fancies that Rustam would have recognized her from afar and embraced both, instead of—and now she switches back to the actuality—what really happened, that Rustam stabbed Suhrāb, his very own son, in the liver.

After the epic finishes 'quoting' her lament, it tells how Tahmīna gathers up all of Suhrāb's possessions and armor, takes his sword and docks his horse's tail, and then distributes his possessions among the poor. In doing this, she in effect annihilates his heroic accouterments by transforming them into something else. Instead of leaving his armor for someone to inherit, along with the heroic identity that is passed on from its previous owner, she gives it away as alms to the poor. And by docking the steed's tail, she has seemingly transformed Suhrāb's war horse into a cart horse. In other words, she turns swords into ploughshares.

These acts which follow the performance of her lament, reinforce the words of protest expressed by the lament itself. They make explicit the threat that women's lament implicitly poses to institutions that depend on the solidarity of men. Gail Holst-Warhaft describes this kind of threat in ancient as well as present-day Greek society:

Once any state has need of a standing army, it must condemn the negative, bitter pain of traditional laments; otherwise how will it recruit volunteers and keep their loyalty? Similarly, once a state has established courts of law, how can it tolerate the cycle of revenge such as the one triggered by female lamenters at the tomb of Agamemnon, or the threat of anarchy posed by laments like that of the widow Vrettis from Mani in the Peloponnese, who, when her only son was killed by neighbours, pulled out her knife in the courtroom, bit it and said:

—Mr President,  
if you don't condemn them  
to death or a life sentence—  
you see this dagger?  
I'll go to the upper quarter  
and if I can't find a grown-up  
I'll grab a small child  
and I'll slay him like a lamb—  
for mine was an only child  
and they cut him to pieces.<sup>36</sup>

Such words are threatening not only because of what they say but also, even more important, for what they are: a song of lament. The agenda of protest in a lament may be quite explicitly threatening, as here, or only implicitly so, as when a mother's grief over the loss of a child in war demoralizes the host of fighting men.

In the case of Tahmīna's lament, of course, the potential demoralization is far worse, since the death of the child reflects on the brutality of the father, Rustam, who is the paragon of Iranian warriors. In this case, the mother's lament is a threat not only to the 'army,' the aggregate of Iranian warriors: it is also a threat to the heroic status of the warrior who is the paragon of the 'army'—and even of the epic that glorifies primarily that paragon, the *Shāhnāma* itself. The lament of Tahmīna, contained by epic, is an implicit threat to that epic. The fact that epic frames the lament, however, can attenuate the threat, since the framework can reassert the male solidarity that is threatened by the female voice of lament. This reassertion is begun by the 'quoting' of a male warrior immediately after the 'quoting' of Tahmīna. The dramatic occasion for the speech of this male speaker, Bahmān, is the anniversary of Suhrāb's death. In this way, epic asserts the male voice after a 'cooling off' period of one year. Although this heroic speech sustains some of the themes that pervade Tahmīna's lament, it reworks these themes to accommodate the dominant agenda of the framing epic:<sup>37</sup>

که با مردگان آشنائی مکن	چنین گفت بهرام نیکوسخن
بسیچیده باش و درنگی مساز	نه آیدر همی ماند خواهی دراز
سزدگر ترا نوبت آید بسر	بتو داد یگروز نوبت پدر
نیابی بخیره چه جوئی کلید	چنین رازش نآید پدید
درین رنگ عمر تو گردد بیاد	در بسته را کس نداند کشاد
چنین بد قضا از خداوند ما	ولیکن که اندر گذشت از قضا
سپنجی میباشد بسی سودمند	دل اندر سرای سپنجی مبند

Thus the eloquent Bahmān said:  
'Don't befriend the dead.

You won't stay here for a long time.

Be equipped and don't fashion a delay.

One day your father gave to you the drum roll [*nowbat*]  
Is it alright if the drum roll comes to an end for you?

Thus his secret does not become manifest.  
When, in bewilderment, you seek, you will not find the key.  
No one knows how to open the firmly shut door.  
In this anguish your life returned to the wind.

However, when he passes on from the judgment,  
thus is the judgment from our Lord.

Don't bind your heart in the ephemeral otherworld  
The ephemeral is not sufficiently profitable.'

It seems as if Tahmīna's rhetoric in pretending that Suhrāb is not dead and still looking for his father is maintained by Bahmān's speech, but for different ends. Bahmān is in effect asking the restless spirit of the dead hero to stop looking for his father. In the upside-down and inside-out world created by Tahmīna's lament, it is the realm of the dead, not the real world, that is ephemeral. Since Suhrāb continues to be addressed as if he were still alive, the ephemeral nature of the world of the living can be reassigned to the world of the dead. In this way, the words of Bahmān can unthink the implicit threat of revenge from the restless spirit of the dead son of Rustam. The threat conjured up by Tahmīna's words of lament can now be dissipated into the insubstantial shades of the dead.

#### NOTES

1. See P.C. Rosenblatt, R. Walsh, and A. Jackson, *Grief and Mourning in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New Haven: Human Relations Area File Press, 1976).

2. For the wording, see al-Tabarī, Appendix, extract from the *Dhayl al-Mudhayyal*, iii<sup>a</sup>, 2387; Ibn al-Athir, *Usd al-ghāba*, i, 299. Cf. Toufic Fahd, EI(2), vol. 8, pp. 64–65. Also Mohamed Abdesselem, *Le thème de la mort* (Tunis: Publications de l'Université de Tunis, 1977), especially pp. 97–104.

3. I follow in general the readings found in vol. 2, pp. 188–92 (lines 1200–1460) of Jules Mohl, ed., *Le livre des rois* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1938–78). The more "scientific" later editions of the *Shāhnāma* omit, on the basis of editorial assumptions with which I do not agree (see in general the work cited in note 7), a number of the verses included by Mohl. See Y.E. Bertels and others, eds., *Firdawsī: Shāhnāma*, 9 vols. (Moscow: Akademija Nauk SSSR, 1960–71), vol. 2, pp. 258–61, and Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, ed., *Firdawsī: The Shahnameh*, 4 vols. (New York 1988–95), vol. 2, pp. 198–99, lines 1–35 (relegated to the *apparatus criticus* on those pages).

4. For ethnographic studies of women's lament traditions in 'tribal' societies of the Islamic world today, see, for example, Lila Abu-Lughod, "Honor and the Sentiments of Loss in a Bedouin Society," *American Ethnologist* 12 (1985): 245–61; see also her *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), especially pp. 197–204. Another important work is Benedicte Grima, *The Performance of Emotion among Paxtun Women: "The Misfortunes which have Befallen Me"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

5. Catherine Lutz, "Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category," *Cultural Anthropology* 1 (1986): 287–309.

6. Steven Feld, *Birds, Weeping, Poetics and Song in Kululi Expression*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

7. For the argument that Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* was composed for performance and even *as* performance (and that the composition made the notion of "performance" homologous with the notion of "writing a book"), see Olga M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

8. On undercurrents of political destabilization within the overall narrative framework of the *Shāhnāma*, see Dick Davis, *Epic and Sedition: The Case of Ferdowsi's Shāhnāmeḥ* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992).

9. Richard P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the 'Iliad'* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

10. Martin, *The Language of Heroes*, p. 44.

11. Martin, *The Language of Heroes*, p. 197.

12. Martin, *The Language of Heroes*, p. 225.

13. Martin, *The Language of Heroes*, p. 85. For an application of Martin's methods to the surviving Arab oral epic traditions, in particular to the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* epic, see Dwight Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arab Oral Epic Traditions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 207.

14. Martin, *The Language of Heroes*, p. 85.

15. Martin, *The Language of Heroes*, p. 87.

16. Martin, *The Language of Heroes*, p. 129; as with 'real' genres, there can be conflation: for example, 'praise and lament are intertwined' (p. 144).

17. For an anthropological application of the concept 'speech act,' see Martin, *The Language of Heroes*, pp. 12, 21–22, 31–32, 52, going beyond the purely philosophical applications of J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) and of J.R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech-Acts* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

18. Loring Danforth, *The Death Rituals of Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).



19. Anna Caraveli, "The Bitter Wounding: The Lament as Social Protest in Rural Greece," in *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*, ed. Jill Dubisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 169–94.

20. C. Nadia Seremetakis, "The Ethics of Antiphony: The Social Construction of Pain, Gender, and Power in the Southern Peloponnese," *Ethos* 18 (1990): 281–311.

21. Michael Herzfeld, "In defiance of destiny: the management of time and gender at a Cretan funeral," *American Ethnologist* 20 (1993): 241–55.

22. Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1974). For me this book remains the basic work on the subject of the continuities and discontinuities of women's lament traditions in Greek society—all the way from ancient times to the present.

23. Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992).

24. Herzfeld, "In Defiance of Destiny," 243.

25. Seremetakis, "The Ethics of Antiphony," 507.

26. Herzfeld, "In Defiance of Destiny," 242.

27. Herzfeld, "In Defiance of Destiny," 242.

28. Herzfeld, "In Defiance of Destiny," 242. When he says "text" in this context, he means simply the text of the recording of the young woman's *performance* of the lament.

29. Herzfeld, "In Defiance of Destiny," 242.

30. Herzfeld, "In Defiance of Destiny," 242.

31. Herzfeld, "In Defiance of Destiny," 242.

32. Herzfeld, "In Defiance of Destiny," 244.

33. More on this theme in Davidson, *Poet and Hero*, pp. 128–41.

34. I am using the term 'stage' in light of the model "five stages of death" introduced by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

35. On the typology of the lamenter's conventional blaming of the beloved dead for his abandoning her and leaving her reputation and her very safety vulnerable, see Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, p. 112.

36. Holst-Warhaft, p. 5, quoting from Kyriakos Kassis, *Moirológia tês Mésa Mánês* 1 (Athens, 1979), p. 74.

37. In the Bertels (Moscow edition), vol. 2, pp. 249–50; p. 199 in the Khalegi-Motlagh edition.

## HEROINES AND OTHERS IN THE HEROIC AGE OF THE TURKS

*Geoffrey Lewis*

*The Turkish national epic, the Oghuz-nāme, challenges stereotypical preconceptions about women in traditional Turkish society.*

The bulk of the Turks who built an empire for the Saljūk family in Iran in the eleventh century and in Asia Minor in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and then did the same for the Ottomans who superseded the Saljūks at the end of the thirteenth century, belonged to a federation of tribes known as the Oghuz. This name began to fall into disuse in the mid-twelfth century, and thereafter they were called, and called themselves, Turks or, if they retained the old tribal way of life, Turkomans.

The national epic of the Turks, the *Oghuz-nāme*, takes its name from their eponymous ancestors. It differs from other peoples' epics in not being a complete work like the *Iliad* or *Aeneid*. While portions of it are found scattered over several historical and quasi-historical works,<sup>1</sup> its longest and most elaborate portion survives as *The Book of Dede Korkut*.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of their westward migration from the region of the Altai Mountains, the Oghuz had come in contact with Islam, first in the lands east of the Caspian Sea, then in Iran and Iraq, which were under the sway of the Arab caliphs of Baghdad. By the end of the tenth century, most of the Oghuz had abandoned their ancestral worship of sky, earth, and water and converted to Islam. In the article 'Ghuzz' [the Arabic form of 'Oghuz'] in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Claude Cahen reminds us however that "it has of course still to be ascertained what form of Islam had been taught to them and how much of it they did in fact absorb at first." Such questions certainly rise in one's mind when reading *The Book of Dede Korkut*.

The book consists of twelve stories from the heroic age of the Oghuz, with an introduction that was composed much later. The stories had been transmitted by wandering bards for centuries before they were committed to writing. When this happened is not known, though it must have been after the Turks ceased to think of themselves as Oghuz, which is to say, by the end of the twelfth century. That much is clear from such passages as these: "In the days of the Oghuz the rule was that when a young man married he would shoot an arrow and set up his marriage-tent wherever the arrow fell." "In the days of the Oghuz there was a stout-hearted warrior named Kanli Koja." "Among the Oghuz nobles, lying was unknown." But there are many indications that the essence of these stories is far older than the end of the twelfth century, dating at least from the time when the Oghuz were new to Islam. One of the clearest indications is a verse descriptive of morning:

When the dawn winds blow cold,  
 When the grey lark sings,  
 When the Arab steeds see their master and neigh,  
 When the long-bearded Persian calls to prayer...(27)

That last line suggests that few if any of the Oghuz had as yet attained the status of muezzin, the one who recites the call to prayer.

The stories have been given a superficial Islamic overlay: the enemy, whoever he may be, is always referred to as 'the infidel'; the heroes call on the Prophet and perform the rites of Muslim prayer when and only when they are in trouble.

The fifth story reflects the time when the Oghuz were newcomers to Islam. Its hero, Crazy Dumrul, picks a fight with Azrael, the Angel of Death, not knowing the nature of his adversary. Overpowered and forced to beg for mercy, he excuses himself in these words:

Mountains we have, with mighty peaks.  
 On those mountains we have vineyards.  
 In those vineyards there are grapes in black clusters.  
 Men press those grapes and the red wine comes.  
 Those who drink of that wine become drunk.  
 I was full of wine; I was out of my mind;  
 I did not know what I was saying. (110)

Azrael contents himself with calling Dumrul a crazy pimp, though he could have pointed out that for a Muslim, however new to the

Faith he might be, to plead drunkenness as a reason for offering violence to one of God's angels was as unpardonable as the original offense.

The number of non-Islamic customs in the stories makes it plain that they originated before the Oghuz had even begun to convert to Islam. When a hero dies, his relatives slaughter his horses and give a funeral feast (Stories 4 and 10). The dying Beyrek asks for his horse's tail to be cut off (Story 12). Boys are not given their 'manhood name' until they have proved their courage in battle or by some particularly daring deed. All of these were practices of the Turks long before they had heard of Islam.

The mystical Bektāshī order, which flourished in Turkey until it was proscribed along with the other dervish orders in 1928, was the target of much criticism from orthodox Muslims because women attended its ceremonies unveiled, on equal terms with men. The Bektāshīs claimed in their defence that in this they were following Turkish pre-Islamic practice, and their claim is borne out by *The Book of Dede Korkut*.

The Oghuz are strictly monogamous, they eat horse-meat (which few Muslims will do, though the Qur'ān does not forbid it), and they drink wine and *kumis*, fermented mare's milk. But it is above all in the status of women that the mode of life depicted in the stories differs from the Islamic norm; the Oghuz women have great freedom and, as we shall see, do not sit passively in their tents. Moreover, unlike women in most traditional Islamic societies, they control their own finances. Crazy Dumrul's mother in the fifth tale says that if her son had been captured she would have given gold and silver to ransom him, and we shall meet other examples.

The male lead in the first story is Dirse Khān, but he can scarcely be called a hero; it is not he but his wife whose behavior is heroic. He comes home from the Great Khān's feast having been humiliated because he has no children. The guests had been divided among three tents, a white tent for the fathers of sons, a red tent for the fathers of daughters, and a black tent for the childless. His wife gives him this advice:

Rise and bestir yourself; have the tents of many colours  
 Set up on the earth's face. Have your men slaughter  
 Of horses the stallions, of camels the males, of sheep the rams...  
 When you see the hungry, fill them.

When you see the naked, clothe them.  
 Save the debtor from his debt...  
 Make an enormous feast, then ask your desire and let them pray.  
 So, with prayerful mouths singing your praises,  
 God may grant us a fine sturdy child. (29)

It was a child, not specifically a son that they wanted; a daughter, though not so highly regarded as a son, would have spared Dirse Khān the worst humiliation.

Eventually, a son is born to them. At the age of fifteen he overpowers a monstrous bull with his bare hands and is given his manhood-name, Boghach [from *bogha*, 'bull']. Dirse Khān is so fond of him that he neglects his forty picked warriors, who therefore conspire to persuade him that the boy is guilty of various abominable crimes. Dirse Khān takes the boy on a hunting trip, during which he shoots an arrow at his son and leaves him for dead. When he returns home without the boy, his wife reminds him that it was her lavish spending, as well as his, that won the people's prayers, to which they owed the birth of their son.

I sent water into the parched channels,  
 I gave the black-garbed dervishes the promised offerings.  
 When I saw the hungry I fed them,  
 When I saw the naked I clothed them.  
 Meat I heaped up in hillocks, lakes of kumis I drew.  
 By the people's prayers, arduously, I conceived a son. (34)

She goes on to say that if he will not tell her what has happened to the boy she will find out for herself.

I shall go to the Khan my father,  
 I shall take loads of treasure and many soldiers,  
 I shall go to the infidel of savage religion.  
 Until I am cut to pieces and drop from my Kazilik horse,  
 Until the neck of my dress is washed in my red blood,  
 Until I am hacked limb from limb and fall to the earth,  
 I shall not turn back from the road my only son has journeyed.

(35)

She takes her forty maidens, mounts her horse and goes in search of him. After climbing the high mountains she sees crows and ravens flying down into a valley and up again. She goes to the spot and finds her son with his two small dogs, who had kept the birds from harming him. He tells her that he has had a visitation from Hizr [in

Islamic legend, an immortal being who, like Elias/Elijah in Jewish legend, roams the earth helping people in trouble]. Hizr has assured him that he will not die of his wound, which can be cured by a salve of mountain flowers and his mother's milk. Interestingly, Hizr's prescription turns out to be not magic but medicine, for the cure is not instantaneous:

They applied the mountain flowers with her milk to the boy's wound. They set him on a horse and led him to his camp. They handed him over to the care of the physicians....In forty days the boy's wound was healed and he was strong and well. (37)

In similar circumstances in the fourth story, the Lady Burla plays an even more active part. Her husband Prince Salur Kazan, who rules the Oghuz in the name of the Great *Khān*, takes their sixteen-year-old son, Uruz, out hunting. They are surprised by sixteen thousand black-armored infidels in the service of the Georgian ruler of Mingrelia. Uruz is all for fighting them, but Kazan forbids it:

My son, my son, O my son!  
 You have not gone among the enemy and cut off heads,  
 You have not killed men and spilled blood.  
 Take your forty chestnut-eyed young men,  
 Go up to the summit of the great mountain...  
 While I war and while I fight,  
 While I struggle and clash my blade,  
 See! Learn! And lie in wait to help us, son. (93)

Uruz, however, disobeys: he rides down to join in the fight and is captured. Kazan, having routed the enemy, fails to find Uruz and assumes that he has run home. Not finding him at home, he goes in search of him and is wounded in a fight with the infidels. Eventually Burla sends for her black horse and grasps her black sword and rides after him with her forty maidens. Just as she finds him, the Oghuz nobles arrive. A tremendous battle takes place with the infidels, in the course of which Lady Burla aims a blow of her black sword at the infidels' black standard and brings it down.

Another heroine, less warlike than the wives of Salur Kazan and Dirse *Khān* but no less heroic, is the wife of Crazy Dumrul, whose acquaintance we have made earlier. A particularly interesting aspect of this story is its strong resemblance to the Classical story of Admetus and Alcestis. When Azrael offers to spare Dumrul's life if he can

find a voluntary substitute, he first tries his father, who replies that Azrael is welcome to all his lands and possessions, but

The world is sweet and life is dear;  
I cannot give up my life, this you must know.  
Dearer than I, fonder than I, is your mother.  
Son, go to your mother.(112)

His mother, however, is no more forthcoming:

Had you been a captive in the hands of the infidel of foul religion,  
Gold and silver I would have given him, and saved you, my son.  
You have come to a dreadful place, to which I cannot come.  
The world is sweet and life is dear;  
I cannot give up my life, this you must know.(113)

Dumrul turns to his wife, not to ask her to take his place but to bid her farewell:

If anyone catches your eye,  
If your heart loves anybody, marry him.  
Do not leave the two boys fatherless. (114-15)

His wife replies:

If after you I should love a man and lie with him,  
May he become a many-coloured snake and sting me!  
Those cowards, your mother and father!  
What is there in a life that they could not show you pity?  
May the Dais and the Throne be my witnesses!  
May earth and sky be my witnesses!  
May mighty God be my witness:  
Let my life be sacrificed for yours.

The invocation of two of the Turks' three ancient objects of worship between the two lines that call on the conventional Islamic witnesses is another indication of the age to which this tale belongs. In the event, God grants Dumrul and his wife another hundred and forty years of life and commands Azrael to take the lives of Dumrul's parents.

There is a similar passage in the tenth story. Segrek is setting out to rescue his brother, who is a prisoner of the infidel Black King of Alinja Castle. He tells his new bride to wait three years for him.

If I do not come then, you will know that I am dead.  
Slaughter my stallion and give a funeral feast for me.  
If your soul loves anyone, marry him.(165)

She replies:

My warrior, I shall wait a year for you.  
 If you come not in a year I shall wait two.  
 If you come not in two I shall wait three then four.  
 If you come not in four I shall wait five then six.  
 I shall pitch a tent where six roads meet,  
 I shall ask news of every traveller.  
 Whoever brings good news, I shall give him horses and raiment,  
 I shall clothe him in caftans.  
 Whoever brings bad news, I shall cut off his head.  
 I will not permit a male fly to settle on me. (165)

Of all the heroines, quite the most spirited is the Lady Čiček in the third story (in which we also meet two of the non-heroines alluded to in my title). She and Beyrek were betrothed in infancy but they do not meet until some fifteen years have passed. The meeting happens by chance: he is out hunting and comes upon "a red tent, pitched on the green grass," in which, he discovers, is the Lady Čiček. She sends her ladies to see who it is, and they report, "Lady, he is a handsome young man with a veil over his face. He says he is a prince and the son of a prince." "Oho!" replies Čiček, "My father used to say he had given me to Beyrek of the veiled face. Can this be he?" She veils herself and goes out to ask him what business he has here. "I am told," says he, "that Prince Bay Bijan has a daughter, and I have come to see her." "The Lady Čiček is not the sort of person to show herself to you," she says, "but I am her serving-woman. Let us ride out together. We shall shoot our bows and race our horses and wrestle. If you beat me at these three, you will beat her also." Beyrek beats her at shooting and riding and then they wrestle.

They stood as wrestlers do, and grasped each other. Beyrek picked the girl up and tried to throw her, then she picked him up and tried to throw him. Beyrek was astonished and said, 'If I am beaten by this girl they will pour scorn on my head and shame on my face among the teeming Oghuz.' He made a supreme effort, grappled with the girl and seized her breast. She struggled to free herself, but now Beyrek seized her slender waist, held her tight and threw her on her back. The girl said, 'Warrior, I am Prince Bay Bijan's daughter, the Lady Chickek.' Three times he kissed her, once he bit her. He took the gold ring off his finger and put it on hers, saying, 'Let this be the token between us.' (64)



But things did not go well for them. Beyrek is captured on his wedding night by the infidel lord of Bayburt Castle. After sixteen years he escapes and arrives home just as Čiček is about to marry Yaltajuk son of Yalanji [Little Creep son of Liar], who has falsely reported that Beyrek has died in captivity. Beyrek goes to the wedding-feast dressed in an old camel-cloth and pretends to be a mad wandering minstrel. Prince Salur Kazan is sufficiently amused by him to give him the run of the camp: "Let him do what he likes, let him go where he wants, let him even join the maidens." He does so, and demands that the bride get up while he plays the lute. Lady Burla is presiding over this gathering as she does over all the women's gatherings, and she tells one of their number, Kisirja Yenge [Barren Aunt], to get up and dance; "How will the crazy minstrel know the difference?" So Kisirja Yenge gets up and says, "Crazy minstrel, I am the bride. Play your lute and I shall dance." But Beyrek recognizes her:

I take my oath I have never mounted a barren mare,  
 Never have I mounted one and ridden off on foray.  
 The herdsmen in the gully watch you;  
 They follow your footsteps to see which valley  
     you have taken,  
 They watch the road to see which way you come,  
 Great tears flow from their eyes.  
 Go to them; they will give you what you want.  
 I have no business with you.  
 Let the girl who is to marry stand,  
 Let her wave her arms and dance,  
 And I shall play the lute. (81)

Kisirja Yenge retires in confusion: "This accursed madman speaks as if he had seen me!" The women then choose another of their number, Boghazja [Pregnant] Fatma. "There's no harm in pretending to be the bride," they say, and dress her in the bride's kaftan. When she tells Beyrek that she is the girl who is to be married, Beyrek replies:

This time I take my oath I have never mounted a pregnant mare;  
 Never have I mounted one and ridden off on foray.  
 Behind your house was there not a little stream?  
 Was your dog's name not Barak?  
 Was your name not Boghazja Fatma of the forty lovers?  
 Go to your place and sit,

Or I shall expose more of your shame; be sure of that.  
 I do not play with you.  
 Let the one who is to marry stand,  
 And I shall play the lute.  
 Let her wave her arms and dance.(82)

"Oh dear!" cries Boghazja Fatma, "The secrets are coming out! This crazy minstrel, spoiling our agreeable party, insulting us and blackening our good name in front of all these people!"

There is no reason to suppose that the past histories of Kisirja Yenge and Boghazja Fatma were unknown to Burla and the other ladies. It is quite inconceivable that two women of such reputation could have served the wife of the ruler of any medieval Islamic community.

The un-Islamic nature of the Oghuz attitude to women is nowhere more apparent than in the sixth story, of Kan Turali and the Princess Saljan.<sup>3</sup> When Kanli Koja decides it is high time that his son Kan Turali find a wife, the son says:

Father, you talk of getting me married, but how can there be a girl fit for me? Before I rise to my feet she must rise, before I mount my well-trained horse she must be on horseback, before I reach the bloody infidels' land she must already have got there and brought me back some heads. (117)

This leads to the following dialogue:

'I see, my son, you don't want a girl; you want a dare-devil hero to look after you and you can eat and drink and be merry.'

'That is so, my dear father, but you'll go and get me some pretty dressed-up doll of a Turkoman girl whose belly will split if I should suddenly lean over and fall on her.'

'Son, finding the girl is up to you; I'll see that you're fed and provided for.' (117)

Kan Turali goes off with his forty young men and has a perfunctory look round but returns without finding a girl to suit him. His father tells him it is no use trying to achieve such an errand in a half-day trip; he himself will do the job properly. Having searched in vain through the lands of the Inner Oghuz and the Outer Oghuz,<sup>4</sup> he arrives in the infidel city of Trebizond, whose king has a beautiful daughter, the Princess Saljan. There is no attempt in the story to enlarge on the theme of her beauty; all the description we have of her is that she used to draw two bows simultaneously, with which

she shot to right and to left, and that the arrow she shot never fell to earth. Anyone who sought her hand had to subdue three fearsome beasts. On the battlements of the city there hung thirty-two heads of infidel princes who had never even got past the first stage. When Kanli Koja arrives home with the news, his son of course decides that the daughter of the King of Trebizond is the only possible wife for him.

Under the black camel I may lie,  
Or on the bull's horns be impaled,  
Or shredded by the lion's claw.  
I may get there or I may not,  
I may come home or I may not.  
Until you see me once again,  
Farewell, lord father and lady mother! (120)

It is hardly necessary to say that he kills the three beasts and wins the Princess, but it is worth mentioning that at no point does anyone suggest that he might be ineligible as a suitor on religious or ethnic grounds. A wedding-feast is prepared, but Kan Turali refuses to marry her until he has seen his parents. After the couple have left Trebizond, however, her father has second thoughts about letting his daughter go—"Just because he killed three beasts he has taken away my dear, my only daughter!"—and he sends six hundred infidels, black-clad, blue-armored, in pursuit of them. Saljan had expected something of the sort and is on the lookout. When the pursuers appear, Kan Turali is asleep.<sup>5</sup> Saljan wakes him but does not wait for him; she rides out alone and routs all the pursuers she sees, but chivalrously "does not pursue those who fled nor kill those who asked for mercy." Meanwhile, Kan Turali has got into difficulty: his horse has been shot and he himself wounded, but Saljan rides up and together they dispose of the enemy.

A splendid display, one may think, of partnership of the sexes. But it would be too much to expect a total lack of *machismo* in the heroic age of the Turks or of any other people. As they go on their way, a thought comes into Kan Turali's head:

Princess Saljan, when you rise up,  
When you ride the black-maned Kazilik horse,  
When you dismount at the threshold of my father's white pavilion,  
When the chestnut-eyed daughters and daughters-in-law  
of the Oghuz tell their stories,  
When everyone says her say,

You will stand there and boast.  
 You will say, 'Kan Turali was helpless;  
 I led the way on my horse and he followed after.'  
 Anger consumes me, the heart has gone out of me.  
 I shall kill you. (130)

And indeed Saljan recognizes the junior status of her sex:

Warrior prince,  
 If a man will boast, let him boast; he is a lion.  
 For woman to boast is scandalous;  
 Boasting does not make a woman a man. (130)

In doing so, however, she does not abandon her self-respect:

I have not held your sweet mouth and kissed you,  
 I have not whispered to you through my red bridal veil.  
 Quickly did you fall in love and quickly did you weary.  
 You are just a son of a bitch!  
 Mighty God knows I am yours,  
 Your friend, your lover; spare me! (131)

"No," says Kan Turali, "I must assuredly kill you." The girl is annoyed and says, "So you will not meet me half-way! Come over here and let us continue the discussion. What will you have, arrows or swords?"

In the ensuing duel, Princess Saljan is the clear winner, and they live happily ever after. We cannot claim her as an Oghuz woman, but the story is relevant to our theme in that she does represent an Oghuz ideal.

The 'Introduction' to the book is typical of an itinerant bard's or story-teller's warming-up patter before coming to his theme. It begins with an explanation of who Dede Korkut was: he was the consummate soothsayer of the Oghuz; whatever he said, happened; he used to resolve the difficulties of the Oghuz people; they would never act without consulting him.

Then comes a string of proverbs, one of which—"The black tents to which no guest comes were better destroyed"—is clear evidence that the Introduction is of the Turkoman and not the Oghuz period, for the tents in which the Oghuz of the stories lived were white, and when Dirse Khān and the other childless guests are put in a black tent at the Great Khān's feast it is to show their inferiority. The third part is meant to cajole and even to intimidate, not very subtly, the bard's hearers, who may or may not include a Khān or other nobleman, into paying a good price for the performance:

The bard roams from land to land, from prince to prince,  
bearing his arm-long lute; the bard knows the generous  
from the stingy....May God ward off the ill luck that  
comes raging, O my Khān! (192)

Next comes a list of 'beautiful' persons and things, mostly Islamic: the Prophet Muḥammad, the Qur'ān, the Friday sermon. Among them is "the lawful wife when she kneels and sits," a far cry from our heroines. Another marked difference from the time of the stories is "The marriage-bower when it is set up by the mottled tent is beautiful." As we have seen, the Oghuz bridegroom would shoot an arrow into the air and site his tent where it fell to earth. The mottled tent is the father's smoke-blackened tent, not the white tent of the Oghuz.

Lastly, "The bard speaks, from the tongue of Dede Korkut." Women, he says, are of four kinds: the pillar that upholds the house, the withering scourge, the ever-rolling ball, and she to whom anything you say makes no difference.

The descriptions of the second, third and fourth of these are good knockabout comedy. The description of the first, however, is more serious. It reflects Turkoman custom, whereas a traditional Muslim would scarcely regard a Muslim woman who entertains a male visitor in her husband's absence as upholding the house:

First comes she who is the pillar that upholds the house. If a respected guest comes to the house when her husband is absent, she gives him food and drink, she entertains him and honours him and sends him on his way. She is of the breed of Ayesha and Fatima, O my Khan! May her babies grow up, may such a wife come to your hearth!

The second is the withering scourge. At break of dawn she rises from her bed and, without washing her hands and face, seeks out nine barley-cakes and a bucket of yoghurt and stuffs herself full to bursting. Then she clutches her ribs and says, 'Since I married this man— may his house fall in ruins!—my belly has never been full, my face has never smiled, my foot has seen no shoe....If only he would die and I could marry someone else and my life be a good life!' May such a woman's babies never grow up, my Khan, may such a wife never come to your hearth!

Third is the ever-rolling ball. Early in the morning she wakes and gets up. Without washing her hands and face she scurries round the camp from end to end and back again, gossiping and eavesdropping. She is abroad till noon. Then she comes home and sees that a thieving

dog and a calf on the rampage have turned her house upside down, so that it looks like a chicken-run or a cow-shed. She screams at the neighbours, 'Zeliha, Zübeyde, Uruveyde, Eyne Melek, Kutlu Melek! I hadn't gone out to die and disappear for ever, you know! I still have to sleep in this ruin! Would it have hurt you to keep an eye on my house for a few minutes? They say the neighbour's due is God's due!' May such a woman's babies never grow up, may such a wife never come to your hearth, O my Khan!

Fourth is she to whom anything you say makes no difference. When a respected guest comes from the plain and the wilds, and her husband is at home and says to her, 'Up and fetch bread, so that we and this guest may eat; the leftover bread won't do, we must have some proper food,' the wife says, 'What do you expect me to do? There's no flour and no sieve in this accursed house!'....And she claps her hand on her rear, turns her side away and her rump towards her husband. If you tell her a thousand things she will not accept one of them, she will not allow her husband's words to enter her ears. She is of the same breed as the prophet Noah's donkey. May God protect you from her also, my Khan, may such a wife never come to your hearth. (193-94)

In Islamic legend the donkey was the last creature to enter the Ark, because the Devil was hanging on to its tail. Noah cried out impatiently, "Come on, even if the Devil is with you!" whereupon the donkey and the Devil came on board together: they are both with us yet.

So there you have it: not perhaps a picture that fits in with one's preconceptions of Turkish society, but it is all in the book.

#### NOTES

1. Notably Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi al-Tawārikh* [Compendium of Histories], written c. 1300, and Abu'l-Ghāzī Bahādur Khān's *Shejere-i Terākime* ("Turkoman Genealogies"), dating from 1070/1659.

2. The best modern edition of the text is Muharrem Ergin's two-volume *Dede Korkut Kitabı*, (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1958, 1963). There are two English translations: (a) F. Sümer, A.E. Uysal and W.S. Walker, *The Book of Dede Korkut: A Turkish Epic* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1972); and (b) Geoffrey Lewis, *The Book of Dede Korkut*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1974). Quotations in this chapter are taken, with some slight modification, from the latter.

3. An examination of variants of the story in Greek, Armenian, and Persian sources, together with a great deal of fascinating peripheral

information, is found in Anthony Bryer's 'Han Turali Rides Again,' *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 2 (1987): 193-206.

4. See Robert Dankoff, "'Inner' and 'Outer' Oğuz in *Dede Korkut*," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 6 (1982): 21-25.

5. There are numerous references in these stories and elsewhere in the ancient literature to the capacity of Oghuz men for staying awake for seven days on end and then sleeping for seven days more. In the first half of the present century, people in the region of Bayburt still teased those overfond of their beds by saying, "Have you fallen into the Uguz [that is, Oghuz] sleep?"

## FEMALE PIETY AND PATRONAGE IN THE MEDIEVAL 'ḤAJJ'

*Marina Tolmacheva*

*The legal requirement of pilgrimage to Mecca allowed medieval women the opportunity to venture far from the seclusion of home, to perform emotion-laden public acts of devotion and (for the wealthy) to provide pilgrim services as a form of pious philanthropy.*

Islam arose in the Arabian society where nomadic migration, travel for commerce, and pilgrimage to holy sites were common. Women participated in some of these activities alongside men, but the hazards and discomfort of travel often made women's participation undesirable. When choice was possible, concerns for safety, privacy, and prestige led women to avoid travel. Medieval Muslim women of various social classes traveled on the whole infrequently, but sometimes over great distances.<sup>1</sup> Three major types of women's journeys were migration, pilgrimage, and travel for family reasons. The rise of veiling and seclusion affected mostly free urban Muslim women, but for them, too, travel away from home remained possible and socially acceptable, provided certain laws and rules of propriety were observed. I discuss these rules and the social context of women's travel elsewhere;<sup>2</sup> this essay focuses on the one type of religious journey ideally expected of every adult Muslim: the *ḥajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Required once in a lifetime, this journey gave women considerable freedom. The wife did not need her husband's consent for it (although if she went against his wish, she was not entitled to support during travel). During *ḥajj* ceremonies women did not have to veil their faces, but in fact, were prohibited from covering it; wives were not subject to their husbands' authority. As William C. Young has argued, the *ḥajj* presented Muslim women with a ritual model which temporarily allowed them to transcend profane models of gender in



ordinary life.<sup>3</sup> I focus here on the spiritual significance for women of the journey to Mecca and on philanthropic activities specifically related to the Meccan pilgrimage.

The proportion of women was higher in *hajj* caravans than among other travelers, but the women who went left no descriptions of their journeys, and we learn of them from books composed by male authors. This study draws especially on the travel records of Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217) and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 770/1369). Several early-modern records are also used, including a few by European visitors to Mecca and the Middle East. Recent theoretical writing on pilgrimage is used to interrogate the tension between social and spiritual aspects of pilgrimage and religious patronage.

#### PIETY THROUGH PATRONAGE

The legal nature of the *hajj* as a required and scheduled journey resulting in performance of highly formalized collective rites distinguishes it from (and places it above) the many local pilgrimages in various parts of the Islamic world. The expense of travel to and from the Hijaz and the stay in Mecca and Medina limited participation for many and provided a legal excuse for not going. Early on, organization and defense of pilgrim caravans became the concern of the state; the elite distributed alms and contributed to the provision of life-saving services to the pilgrims. Charity and patronage associated with the *hajj* were grander in scale and expected to bring higher rewards than those supporting the construction and restoration of local shrines [*ziyāras*] and visits to them.<sup>4</sup> Below, I discuss some of the ways in which elite Muslim women exercised patronage occasioned by their own pilgrimage to Mecca or designed to facilitate travel and pilgrimage by others.

Religious charitable works were the dominant form of women's philanthropy; very little is known of women's secular patronage. Most activities and donations pursued two objectives: building (including construction and maintenance) and services, and the examples below have been selected with a view toward emphasizing these two categories.

In Islam, charity is a legal obligation and is exercised by the state as well as individuals. On important religious occasions, in addition to the alms allotted by the state, women of wealthy families and especially royal ladies often advanced considerable sums for

distribution in their own names. Significant philanthropic activities by women date back to the early 'Abbāsīd queens *Khayzurān* (d. 173/789) and *Zubayda* (d. 216/831). The former made her first pilgrimage to Mecca in 159/776 as a slave-consort of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mahdī; in 171/788 she returned as queen-mother of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809). To celebrate her triumph, she purchased the former home of the prophet Muḥammad in Mecca and converted it into a mosque. Hārūn's wife, *Zubayda*, was a pious woman who had one hundred female slaves recite the Qur'ān in unison; she performed several pilgrimages. During the one in 190/805, she witnessed the effects of a recent drought and determined to have an aqueduct constructed to carry the water of the Spring of Ḥunain to Mecca some twelve miles away.<sup>5</sup> She also had wells and caravanserais built along the nine-hundred-mile road from Mecca to Kufa, which was named in her honor *Darb Zubayda*. In addition to construction, maintenance was a major expenditure. Endowments [*waqf*, pl. *awqāf*] established by *Zubayda* paid for maintenance of the hostels and fortifications along the Kufa road and for the restoration of monuments in Medina, as well as other places.<sup>6</sup> *Shaghab*, the mother of the caliph al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–32), not only created many endowments in Mecca and Medina, but donated one million dinars each year from her estates in support of pilgrimage.<sup>7</sup> *Zubayda* also started the tradition of traveling in richly decorated litters. When Ibn Jubayr witnessed the lavish pilgrimage of the wife of the ruler of Aleppo, Nūr al-Dīn (569–77/1174–81), he described "palanquins fastened atop camels, draped, some of them with all sorts of silk fabrics, others with fine linen stuff, according to the wealth and luxury of their owners; everyone put on a public display according to his means.... The most remarkable of the ones we saw was the palanquin of the Sharifa Jumana, daughter of Fulayta [Sharif of Mecca, 1123–32] and the paternal aunt of the Amir Mukthir, since the end of her curtains trailed in waves upon the ground...."<sup>8</sup> The tradition continued, and a similar spectacle was described in 1432 by a Christian pilgrim to the East, Bertrandon de la Brocquière, who saw in Damascus the caravan returning from Mecca: "Behind this [*mahmal*] camel... came a Turkish lady, a relation of the Grand Seigneur, in a litter borne by two camels with rich housings. There were many of these animals covered with cloth of gold."<sup>9</sup> The lady had been to Mecca at least

three times. In the fourteenth century, a Moroccan caravan carrying the princess Maryam to Mecca stopped at Cairo, occasioning much talk and celebration.<sup>10</sup>

While the lavishness certainly served political and public-relations ends, it was also part of a devotional demonstration. In Egypt, the mother of the Mamlūk Sulṭān al-Ashraf Sha'bān II (764–78/1363–76), Baraka Khātūn (d. 774/1372), was presented with a magnificent pilgrimage procession in 770/1368, called in her honor “the Year of the Sultan’s Mother.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, many charitable acts lacked drama and overt advertising. Among these were provision of spare camels for the sick and for foot pilgrims, distribution of water on the march, and supply of medical remedies and services.<sup>12</sup> On such occasions, the benefactresses were not always present: “When these princesses do not wish to make the pilgrimage themselves, they send each year camels to carry water for the pilgrims...along the road as well as at Mt. Arafat and at the Holy Mosque, day and night...”<sup>13</sup> Such services, while impersonal, benefited concrete individuals. Ibn Jubayr reports Turkish princesses ransoming prisoners, especially strangers whom no one else would ransom<sup>14</sup> (because pilgrims did not carry weapons, they were particularly vulnerable to raiding by the Bedouin and, during the Crusades, to Christian-Muslim warfare). In the course of his travels Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was granted accommodation by several patrons, including some women. Leaving Mecca after one of his several pilgrimages, he was given protection by Sitt Zāhida (d. c. 1326), a pious and learned woman also known to us from other sources. She traveled despite her blindness and was attended by a troop of brethren.<sup>15</sup> Also in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s time, Mecca was visited by Sitt Ḥadaq, a high-placed Mamlūk lady who commemorated her return from pilgrimage (728/1328) by erecting a mosque in Cairo.<sup>16</sup>

Not all public displays of charity were equally welcome. After Zubayda’s husband died and her son, al-Amīn (r. 193–98/809–13), was killed in the war with his half-brother, al-Ma’mūn (r. 198–218/813–33), the latter apparently prevented Zubayda from going on pilgrimage again, until asked on her behalf by his bride Būrān at their wedding in 219/825. Perhaps he did not wish to stir undesirable political thinking in places where Zubayda’s past philanthropy was still evident.<sup>17</sup> Acts of charity performed by important foreign visitors carried particular significance and could be intended or perceived

as challenging local authorities. When two Mughal queens extended their stay in Mecca over several years (983–90/1575–82), the Ottoman administration became somewhat alarmed by their ostentatious distributions of alms.<sup>18</sup> After sending a particularly lavish caravan with several princesses in 1507, the Mamlūk sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī (r. 906–22/1501–17) refused to permit one of them to return from the Hijaz because she had become politically dangerous to him; she had to remain in Mecca where she died.<sup>19</sup>

Construction and building endowments by women have been noted in many parts of the Muslim world.<sup>20</sup> Although usually less imposing and simpler in decoration than the buildings commissioned by rulers, these buildings show that royal women participated in this form of philanthropy to a remarkable degree. For example, of the one hundred and fifty documented building endowments in Rasūlid Yemen (seventh–ninth/thirteenth–fifteenth centuries), almost one-third were established by women.<sup>21</sup> A woman is credited with building the first mausoleum; that was Ḥabashiyya, the mother of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Muntaṣir (r. 247–48/861–62).<sup>22</sup> In addition to the many royal ladies, important serving-ladies and even royal slaves built mosques and mausolea.<sup>23</sup> These patronesses of religious establishments sometimes endowed them not in their own names but those of their male relatives—brothers or, if queen-mothers, in the names of their sons—though not their husbands. (Also, sometimes the ruling sons commemorated their mothers.)<sup>24</sup> Women with an interest in Sufism built religious hostels [*khanaqas*] which facilitated study and travel (and, when built in frontier locations, defense). Hospitals were among the establishments founded by women. In Islam, expenses for public medical care fit under the umbrella of religious alms. A hospital at the gates of Mecca endowed by an Ottoman queen is mentioned in an anonymous European description of the *hajj*.<sup>25</sup> The tombs of saintly women, especially the women of the Prophet’s family, were (and are) so commonly believed to cure disease and infertility that, even on the general pilgrim route in Medina, such shrines have become an almost exclusive preserve of women seeking healing, who are frequently accompanied by small children.

It has been noted that pilgrimage places are “elevated above ordinary religious establishments, usually because [they lay] claim to an exaggerated relationship to the divine.”<sup>26</sup> Visual records of

the contemporary *hajj*—paintings on the outer walls of the pilgrims' residences, common in the Near East—testify to the unique value attached to the Meccan pilgrimage, by comparison with any other destinations, however holy. In particular, they show that, apart from the rites performed at the Ka'ba, travel to Mecca in itself and the visiting of the Prophet's mosque at Medina constituted the most important remembrances of the pilgrimage to those who completed it.<sup>27</sup> Supporting such travel to the two holy cities<sup>28</sup> was a drain on both private resources of individuals and on government services; opportunities for private charity abounded. In fact, while poorer medieval travelers drew on the largess of queens and princesses, these women both gave and took: they often accepted government grants, gifts of food, and armed protection supplied by local rulers in the regions through which they traveled.<sup>29</sup> The pious buildings erected by them were built on land obtained by grants, and the ruler's money often paid for the construction as well.<sup>30</sup> Yet these were not palaces that the women built for themselves but religious and public edifices; some of them the princesses not only did not visit but never even saw.<sup>31</sup>

These examples illustrate in various ways that pilgrimage, whether one's own or performed by others, offered multiple charitable opportunities for devotional expression. That the individual and the devotional were never far away from the social aspects of philanthropy is confirmed by the wording of Zubayda's inscription at a reservoir in Mecca, articulating her spiritual intent:

Umm Ja'far the daughter of Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far the son of the Commander of the Believers Maṣṣūr—may Allah be pleased with the Commander of the Believers—ordered the construction of these springs in order to provide water for the pilgrims to the House of Allah and to the people in this Sanctuary, praying thereby for Allah's reward and seeking to draw nigh unto him.<sup>32</sup>

#### PIETY AND EMOTION ON PILGRIMAGE

In the Middle Ages, Muslim women were expected to reside only within the Realm of Islam [*dār al-Islām*]. Even men were gravely concerned with safety, amenities, and the treatment of Muslims in infidel lands. Thus, pilgrimage would normally involve a woman's crossing of only Muslim territories.<sup>33</sup> Even there, however, the *hajj* made the pilgrims peculiarly vulnerable because both its destination and its timing in the same month of the lunar calendar were known

well in advance to pirates and bedouins who lived by pillage, and women travelers found no pity from the attackers: they were robbed, raped, captured for ransom or even killed. During some particularly restless or hungry years, Islamic authorities suspended the obligation of *hajj*. Despite this, women came, with their husbands and children, from as far away as West Africa.<sup>34</sup> Elite women came, breaking their “constant confinement” to houses,<sup>35</sup> and often on their own, even though Islam exempts from the obligation of pilgrimage, women who have no husband or appropriate male relative to accompany them.<sup>36</sup> Of course, they could afford other escorts. Often, more than one royal lady traveled in the same caravan, reducing the total expense while adding to the general splendor.

Pilgrims were advised to travel in groups as an expression of humility and religious solidarity.<sup>37</sup> Several stations before reaching Mecca, they perform the ritual ablutions [*ghusl*] and then could enter the sacred state of *iḥrām*. In this state, men wore a special, unsewn, outfit but no special dress was prescribed for women; they usually wore long white gowns and sandals. The state of ritual purity [*ṭahāra*] was completed by cutting off some locks of hair (men shaved their heads) and removing pubic and underarm hair. The rules prohibited marriage, sexual intercourse, and the use of jewelry and perfume. The face had to be uncovered.<sup>38</sup>

Separation of the sexes under the crowded conditions of Mecca during the pilgrimage season was of major concern to *hajj* officials and participants. Since even a touching of male and female hands could lead to invalidation of the rites, special eunuchs [*aghawāt*] were employed to direct and control the crowds and direct the women during the circuits [*ṭawāf*] and prayer.<sup>39</sup> While the arrangement was designed to reduce the risk of pollution equally to both sexes, women found themselves in a distressingly marginalized position:

Usually, when they are with the men, they are left apart; they look upon the Noble House without being able to go in; they contemplate the Black Stone but do not touch it at all. In all that, which is their lot, it is only looking, and chagrin confuses and shakes them; they are permitted only the circumambulation, and that segregated.<sup>40</sup>

As described by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, the area around the Ka‘ba [*maṭāf*] was divided into sex-specific areas: white sand was spread over the peripheral part reserved for women.<sup>41</sup> A late seventeenth-century observer, Joseph Pitts, noted a similar pattern: “Sometimes there

are several hundred at *towoaf* at once, especially after *acsham nomas*, or fourth time of service, which is after candle-lighting..., and these both men and women; but the women walk on the outside the men and the men nearest to the *Beat [Allah]*.<sup>42</sup> *Shī'ites* set aside a period during the *hajj* for women to complete the seven-fold circumambulation.<sup>43</sup> Meccan tradition allowed local women to express their piety by coming out to perform the circuit of the Ka'ba on Thursday evenings. They "come in their finest apparel, and the sanctuary is saturated with the smell of their perfume. When one of these women goes away, the odour of the perfume clings as an effluvium to the place after she has gone."<sup>44</sup> Other ceremonies which were part of the greater *hajj* picture also involved segregation. On 15 *Dhū al-Qa'da*, after the Egyptian caravan carrying the *mahmal*, a special chest with the new cover for the Ka'ba, had arrived at Mecca, the Ka'ba was opened for visitors: only men were allowed to enter during the daytime, and only women entered at night.<sup>45</sup> In later centuries access into the building was alternated by the day. As reported by Pitts, who accompanied the pilgrimage of 1685, "The *Beat Allah* is opened but two days in the space of six weeks, *viz.* one day for the men and the next day for the women."<sup>46</sup> After the cover [*kiswa*] of the Ka'ba was changed on 27 *Dhū al-Qa'da* [two days before the inauguration of the *hajj*], access to the building ceased: "The sanctified Ka'ba is not opened again from that day until the Standing at Arafa is accomplished."<sup>47</sup> Earlier in the year, however, women had the day of 29 Rajab exclusively for themselves, as described by Ibn Jubayr:

They emerge from each of their lodgings after many days' preparation, similar to the ones made before visits to the noble tombs. There is not, on that day, a single woman in Mecca who does not present herself at the Sacred Mosque. The Banu Shayba [hereditary attendants], after they come to open the noble door, according to custom, hasten to leave the Ka'ba and leave it empty for the women. Men too leave the area of the circumambulation and the Hijr. There remains not a single man around the Blessed House. The women hasten so quickly to enter that the Banu Shayba are scarcely able to go down from the Noble House through the midst of them. The women form themselves in lines and then get all mixed and tangled as they try to get it all together. There are cries, shouts, *tahlils*, *takbirs* [religious exclamations], and their jostling repeats the spectacle of the Yemenite Sarwa bedouin during their stay in Mecca....After

continuing thus for half a day, they sort themselves out into circumambulating and visiting the Hijr....It is for them a great day, their day, brilliant and radiant.<sup>48</sup>

When women could not get close, the lack of physical contact with the Ka'ba was felt as a significant deprivation. It is traditional, though not required, to touch the large stone in the southern ('Yemeni') corner of the Ka'ba every time one passes it; each circuit is begun by kissing, or at least touching, the Black Stone; pilgrims press themselves to a part of the wall between the Black Stone and the door of the Ka'ba, called *Multazim*.<sup>49</sup> Both Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa recorded impressions of the deep pleasure the believers derived from kissing the Black Stone.<sup>50</sup> After the ritual washing of the Ka'ba, men and women equally hastened to wash face and hands in that water to gain blessing [*baraka*].<sup>51</sup> Clearly, women wanted immediate proximity to the Ka'ba and used every opportunity to attain it at unscheduled times:

But when there are but few men at *towoaf*, then the women get an opportunity to kiss the said stone; and when they have gotten it, they close in with it as they come round and walk round as quick as they can to come to it again, and so keep possession of it for a considerable time. The men, when they see that the women have got the place, will be so civil as to pass by and give them leave to take their fill (as I may say) in their *towoaf* or walking around, during which they are using some formal expressions. When the women are at the stone, then it's esteem'd a very rude and abominable thing to go near them, respecting the time and place.<sup>52</sup>

#### A HIERARCHY OF PIETY

These testimonies confirm that the *hajj* played an important role as an opportunity for satisfying the individual need for pious expression by medieval women. The question of how the *hajj* is related to the social order, first asked by Victor Turner,<sup>53</sup> deserves to be approached from a devotional point of view. In other words, we need to ask how class and individual legal and economic status influenced the range of religious expression and the individual's ability to act upon pious inclination. William C. Young speaks of a "hierarchy of piety" which emerges in the performance of the *hajj* to replace the social distinctions between rich and poor and governors and governed.<sup>54</sup> I propose that the material factors built into the pilgrimage institution gave patronage devotional value beyond that derived from the



hierarchical background of class and wealth which made philanthropy possible. In addition to that, there was apparently yet another, more purely spiritual hierarchy, although membership in the latter was probably somewhat nebulous. Adjudged by the informal opinion of male experts, it implied high honor and was achieved only by a few women. It probably required not only selfless devotion and learning, but a certain kind of spiritual progress and, in addition, a degree of sharing and openness toward the other aspirants—sharing of a less tangible kind, but nevertheless no less thankfully received. Throughout centuries, relatively few learned women became acknowledged religious scholars, but the legitimacy of those listed in Muslim reference works “was definitely accepted by the predominantly male hadith scholars.”<sup>55</sup> Although philanthropy typically emanated from the women of the ruling elite, the spiritual superiority of the erudite and ascetic lady legists enhanced women’s reputation and social standing. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa met several learned women and even took instruction from one of them; his patroness Sitt Zāhida may have been a learned and spiritual leader of that class: her name means ‘Lady Ascetic.’

Clearly, class, wealth, and status were of paramount importance when it came to the ability to translate personal piety into support of the large-scale collective ritual. The public became both passive spectators of lavish displays of clothes, carriages, and retainers—and active consumers or beneficiaries of charity extended by the wealthy to enhance the performance of the *hajj*. The pious aspects of travel to Mecca could be supplemented, but not overshadowed, by political considerations, international or dynastic. These occasionally led to deliberate, sometimes dramatic, emphasis on the public context of this private obligation.<sup>56</sup> Although the sources make clear that such demonstrations were by no means unusual, they clashed with the intended focus on the inner self and a mood of communion with God expected of the pilgrim.

The records cited above were created by men who were devout, sought knowledge, and found pleasure in diverse experiences. Their writings paint a picture of the *hajj* and the participants which is in marked contrast to the stern instructions set forth in the *ṣūfi* treatise *Kashf al-mahjūb*:

Whoever seeks his bodily station must renounce all lusts and pleasures and put on the pilgrim’s garb and clothe himself in a winding-sheet

[*kafan*] and refrain from hunting lawful game, and keep all his senses under strict control. But whoever seeks his spiritual station must renounce familiar associations and bid farewell to pleasures and take no thought of other than God...then he must stand on the 'Arafāt of gnosis [*ma'rifat*] and from there set out for the Muzdalifa of amity [*ulfat*] and from there send his heart to circumambulate the temple of Divine purification [*tanzih*], and throw away the stones of passion and corrupt thoughts in the Minā of faith, and sacrifice his lower soul on the altar of mortification and arrive at the station of friendship [*khullat*].<sup>57</sup>

The academic Islamic view of the *hajj*, then, is a metaphor for spiritual journey—a view not unlike some modern western interpretations of pilgrimage.<sup>58</sup> “For many sufis,” writes Megan Reid, “pilgrimage is a prototype of the sufi way.”<sup>59</sup> To the believer who had undergone hardship and danger to reach Mecca, the book preaches: “Accordingly, what is truly valuable is not the Ka‘ba, but contemplation and annihilation in the abode of friendship, of which things the sight of Ka‘ba is indirectly a cause.”<sup>60</sup> In this paradigm, the women’s emotionalism is inappropriate and the proximity to the Ka‘ba immaterial. Yet Ibn Jubayr recognized that the women “find peace in kissing the Black Stone,”<sup>61</sup> and even a Christian interloper noted the deep sincerity and devout emotionalism: “At the very first sight of the *Beat Allah* the *haggas* melt into tears....And I profess I could not chuse but admire to see those poor creatures so extraordinarily devout and affectionate when they were about these superstitions, and with what awe and trembling they were possess’d.”<sup>62</sup>

Certainly, the women’s seemingly insatiable emotionalism was sharpened by the somewhat restricted opportunity to worship at the Ka‘ba, but the sources make clear that men, too, were profoundly affected. The approach of the pilgrimage season was marked by a festive atmosphere felt by all. There were state-sponsored celebrations at caravan departures and major transit points.<sup>63</sup> Once the pilgrim caravan reached Mecca, “all that night there is nothing to be heard nor seene, but gunshot and fireworkes of sundry sortes, with such singing, sounding, shouting, halowing, rumours, feasting, and triumphing, as is wonderful.”<sup>64</sup> Participating in these collective manifestations of religious accomplishment was one of the communal aspects of the *hajj*. On 29 Rajab, too, women’s devotions were accompanied by feasting and elaborate preparations.<sup>65</sup> But it was mostly the intense feelings and their display, especially by

women, that caused the disapproval of the religious experts. Among the critics was Ibn al-Ḥājj al-‘Abdarī, who complained about women’s comportment at religious ceremonies. Some legal scholars and mystic authorities found that the travel aspects of the *hajj* could be morally dangerous: “the affect of its new cities, its foreign faces upon the young, the untravelled, or undisciplined cannot be underestimated.”<sup>66</sup> Even at Mecca and Medina, during the Middle Ages, music was performed, women danced and sang. It was, in part, against such practices that the Wahhābī fundamentalist movement arose in the eighteenth century. The pilgrimage in which the women participated and which their funds and projects helped make possible was not the pilgrimage required by the religious purists. As the book *Kashf al-mahjūb* [*Revelation of the Concealed*, a telling title] explains, the inner journey is infinitely superior to the actual travel experience:

Pilgrimages, then, are of two kinds: (1) in absence [from God] and (2) in presence (of God). Anyone who is absent from God at Mecca is in the same position as if he were absent from God in his own house....Pilgrimage is an act of mortification [*mujāhadat*] for the sake of obtaining contemplation [*mushāhadat*], and mortification does not become the direct cause of contemplation, but only a means to it. Therefore the true object of pilgrimage is not to visit the Ka‘ba, but to obtain contemplation of God.<sup>67</sup>

The elevated and enlightened level of such an inner experience could not be realistically expected from the average pilgrim. As Alan Morinis has noted, most pilgrimages are goal-oriented. “The direct experience can be the goal itself...or the means of the goal.”<sup>68</sup> While sufis, especially, split hairs insisting on distancing the former from the latter, Bertrandon de la Brocquière (in Damascus, 1432) learned that the direct experience was overwhelmingly the more important for the masses. “These people pretend that, once having made a pilgrimage to Mecca, they cannot be damned. Of this I was assured by a renegade slave, a Bulgarian by birth.”<sup>69</sup> And even though spiritual piety was valued higher, the pious observances, especially by women, were enjoined upon the believers of all classes, naive and sophisticated alike, and perceived as a social asset. The Turko-Islamic “Mirror for Princes,” *Kutadgu Bilig* (461/1069), devotes a special chapter to the subject of “how to choose a wife.” The book makes a number of recommendations (marry a virgin, choose a wife

below yourself in status) and distinguishes four qualities: rich, beautiful, of noble stock, and—the decisive criterion—pious:

But you, prince of men, who chose a wife for her piety: if you found such a woman, then you have found all four of these together!

So if you find a good and God-fearing woman, do not hesitate to marry her, my good man. And if she is devout and chaste, then she is highborn. All three of those are gathered in this one point, O noble one. So if you are wise, you will choose a God-fearing wife, for then you will have all four of these qualities together. When you find a woman of this sort, O manly one, do not waste the opportunity, but go ahead and marry her.<sup>70</sup>

While marrying during the *hajj* proper was prohibited, pilgrimage occasioned matrimony not only for personal inclination but also for pious reasons. Sexual contact was rife with pollution, and intercourse voided the whole exercise, but male pilgrims did not turn a blind eye to female attractions, especially since no veil was worn over the face.<sup>71</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who contracted his first two marriages before reaching Mecca on his first pilgrimage, adds a comment on their “rare and surpassing beauty”<sup>72</sup> to his description of the Meccan women’s Thursday pious promenade around the Ka‘ba. According to the Hakluyt anonym, “The women of the place are courteous, jocund, and lovely, faire, with alluring eyes.”<sup>73</sup>

In Ottoman times, women traveling without male escort could enter a particular kind of marital accomodation designed to facilitate their completion of the *hajj*. The arrangement is described by Burckhardt:

Female *hajjis* sometimes arrive from Turkey for the Ḥajj: rich old widows, who wish to see Mecca before they die; or women who set out with their husbands and lost them on the road by disease. In such cases the female finds at Jidda *dalils* [guides], or as this class is called, *muhallil*, ready to facilitate their progress through the sacred territory in the character of husbands. The marriage contract is written out before the Qadi, and the lady, accompanied by her *dalil*, performs the pilgrimage to Mecca, Arafat and all the sacred places. This, however, is understood to be merely a nominal marriage, and the *dalil* must divorce the woman on his return to Jidda. If he were to refuse a divorce, the law cannot compel him to it, and the marriage would be considered binding; but he could no longer exercise the lucrative profession of *dalil*.<sup>74</sup>

A very different kind of matrimonial business at Mecca was observed by Snouck Hurgronje, whose account tends to add to the

long list of complaints about the rapacity of Meccan *hajj* professionals and the unceasing gouging on all fronts. In this second case, women are presented in an unflattering light as opportunistic predators and exploiters of the pious male pilgrims; apparently the ladies seeking marriage for economic gain hoodwinked the gullible visitors:

We should have included the women among the guilds of exploiters of pilgrims. They not only help their husbands faithfully in their business, but also work on their own account. Pilgrims who spend a few months on the pilgrimage, and those too who settle down in the country for a few years, generally wish to marry. As they habitually bring a full purse with them into the Holy City, the demand is answered by a plentiful supply.... Meccan women can easily get rid of distasteful marriage bonds, and we can now understand why continual change in marriage is pleasing to most of them. Their wares in the pilgrim market are their charms; the oftener the charms are made the subject of new contracts, the better for business. The relation between supply and demand in Meccan society is strongly influenced by the concourse of strangers. A Meccan man, it is true, does not allow himself to become beguiled by the daughters of Mecca the way a stranger does, but the demand on the part of strangers makes it easy for the Meccan women to stipulate for great advantages for themselves.

The foreigner who chooses to become a citizen of Mecca is besieged on all sides by offers of marriage.... When the purse is empty, the woman at once begins to show the unpleasant side of her nature, until at last her husband, unconsciously complying with her wishes, pronounces the form of divorce over her. He must then give her support for three (additional) months, and so she has full time to seek a new wedded position with the help of her friends.<sup>75</sup>

These concluding illustrations of expedient, but apparently typical, short-lived marriages point to a specific aspect of the *hajj* inherent in the very nature of pilgrimage journey: the transitory nature of the visit to a pilgrimage destination and the fleeting, yet not totally unexpected nature of human contacts formed in the time-frame of the *hajj* (Snouck Hurgronje's "concourse of strangers"). Recounted by the non-Muslim observers with dry irony, they reflect certain tensions between the aspiration of pious visitors and the wants of the local Muslims which deserve further attention by researchers. Focused as they are on the women's diverse needs in each type of case, they form a human-interest footnote to the *hajj*

picture developed above. They add a few individualized brushstrokes to the tableau of crushing multitudes engulfed in religious ecstasy. The same kind of devotional fervor touched the humble commoner and the elite few who protected and supported the many. This picture frames piety and patronage in a twin embrace. The pious aspirations of commoners and the pious largess of the wealthy and influential—the one was impossible or meaningless without the other. Piety fed patronage. Patronage, in turn, translated the piety of the (female) patrons into philanthropy that made the pious expression possible for the masses through the support of the *hajj* rites and the requisite travel, a goal otherwise unattainable for many. It remains to be explored why secular patronage remained largely the domain of men.

## NOTES

1. Marina Tolmacheva, "Defying Distance and Danger: Medieval Muslim Women's Travel," forthcoming in *Women and Families in Muslim and Jewish Societies* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1997).

2. Marina Tolmacheva, "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa on Women's Travel in the *Dar al-Islam*," in *Women and the Journey: The Female Travel Experience*, eds. Bonnie Frederick and Susan H. McLeod (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 119–40.

3. William C. Young, "The Ka'ba, Gender, and the Rites of Pilgrimage," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25.2 (1993): 296.

4. Everywhere in the Islamic world, including the Hijaz, *ziyāras* are dominated by women. It was probably so in the Middle Ages as well. For diachronic comparison of Central Asian material, see Marina Eva Subtelny's "The Cult of 'Abdullah Ansari under the Timurids," in *Gott ist schön: Festschrift für Annemarie Schimmel* (Berlin-New York: Peter Lang, 1994), pp. 377–406, and "The Cult of Holy Places: Religious Practices Among Soviet Muslims," *Middle East Journal* 43.4 (1989): 593–604.

5. Nabia Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad: Mother and Wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 242–43.

6. Esin Atil, "Islamic Women as Rulers and Patrons," *Asian Art* 6.2 (1993): 6.

7. Ruth Roded, *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), p. 124.

8. Ibn Jubayr cited in Francis E. Peters, *The Hajj: the Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 132–33. See also Ibn Jobair [Jubayr]. *Voyages*, traduits et

annotés par Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombines, 3 vols. (Paris: Geuthner, 1949–56), vol. 2, pp. 119–20 (Arabic) and vol. 2, pp. 150–54 (French).

9. Peters, *Hajj*, p. 80.

10. Megan Reid, "The Sufi Hajj and the Rakb Al-Maghribi," paper presented at the 27th Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (Research Triangle Park, N.C., 1993), p. 40.

11. Roded, *Women*, p. 119.

12. Such services are detailed in 'Ankawi, "The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Mamlūk Times," *Arabian Studies* 1 (1974): 146–170, and Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans 1517–1683* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994), esp. ch. 2. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa received free transportation from a *shaykh* who offered him the use of half a litter. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb and C.F. Beckingham (Cambridge, Eng.: The Hakluyt Society, 1958–1994), 4 vols., vol. 1, pp. 249–50.

13. Ibn Jobair, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 185/214.

14. Ibn Jobair, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 308/360.

15. Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, vol. 2, p. 355.

16. Caroline Williams, "Mosque of Sitt Hadaq: Female Patronage in Medieval Cairo," paper presented at the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (Beverly Hills, CA, 1988). The woman's reputation for charitable generosity during pilgrimage reached Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: see Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, vol. 2, p. 357.

17. Abbott, *Two Queens*, pp. 233, 235.

18. Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, pp. 131–32.

19. Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultans al-Ashraf Qaytbay and Qansuh al-Ghawri in Egypt* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1993), p. 156.

20. A convenient overview of women's patronage, especially in architecture, is found in the special issue of *Asian Art* 6.2 (1993): *Patronage by Women in Islamic Art*.

21. Noha Sadek, "In the Queen of Sheba's Footsteps: Women Patrons in Rasulid Yemen," *Asian Art* 6.2 (1993): 21.

22. Atil, "Islamic Women": 5.

23. Three slave women of the Rasūlid queen, Jihat Ṣalāḥ (d. 1361), each built a small mosque at Zabid. Sadek, "Queen of Sheba," p. 21. Sitt Ḥadaq was originally the sultan's wet-nurse.

24. Ülkü Bates. "The Architectural Patronage of Ottoman Women," *Asian Art* 6.2 (1993): 63. The author also perceptively notes that the sons by co-wives used the dedications to distinguish themselves from their half-brothers.

25. "This city hath three gates, one of which is an hospitall caused to be built by Cassachi, called the Rose, who was wife to Sultan Soliman grandfather to this emperor." Anonymous, in "A description of the yeerely

voyage or pilgrimage of the Mahumitans, Turkes and Moores unto Mecca in Arabia," in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nations* (New York: AMS Press, 1965), p. 363. The hospital could not have been very old at the time: the source dates to the early reign of Murād III (r. 982–1003/1574–95); Sulaymān II Qānūnī died in 974/1566. The text was originally published in 1599.

26. Alan Morinis, "Introduction," in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Alan Morinis (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 17.

27. Ann Parker and Avon Neal, *Hajj Paintings: Folk Art of the Great Pilgrimage* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

28. The pilgrimage occupies days 1–10 of the month *Dhū al-Ḥijja*; a stay of eight days at Medina is recommended to accommodate the performance of 40 ritual prayers. David Long, *The Hajj Today: A Survey of the Contemporary Makkah Pilgrimage* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 23.

29. Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, p. 130.

30. Bates, *Ottoman Women*, pp. 62–63.

31. Zubayda endowed buildings in some locations which she probably never visited. Safiye Sultan, the favorite of the Ottoman sultan Murād III, had her agent supervise the construction of a mosque in Cairo. Atil, "Islamic Women": 6; Bates, *Ottoman Women*, p. 59.

32. Abbot, *Two Queens*, p. 244.

33. After 1498, navigation on the Indian ocean was no longer controlled by Muslims, and European (especially Portuguese) interference seriously aggravated the traffic between India and Arabia. See, for example, Naim R. Farooqi, "Moguls, Ottomans, and Pilgrims: Protecting the Routes to Mecca in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *International History Review* 10.2 (1988): 198–220, and Patricia Risso, *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), esp. chapters 5 and 6.

34. Burkhardt and Ibn Jubayr in Peters, *Hajj*, pp. 97, 135. 'Ankawi, "Pilgrimage to Mecca": 156 mentions women and children among the victims. For African pilgrimage, see Umar A.R. al-Naqar, *The Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1972 and London: C. Hurst, 1978); Birks, J.S. *Across the Savannas to Mecca: The Overland Pilgrimage Route from West Africa*; James Stell Thayer, "Pilgrimage and Its Influence on West African Islam," in *Sacred Journeys*, pp. 169–87.

35. Young, "Ka'ba," 300, note 50.

36. s.v. "Ḥadjdj," EI(2), vol. 3, pp. 31–38. Soraya Altorki notes the growing freedom of contemporary Arab women to perform the *hajj* unaccompanied by male relatives in *Women in Saudi Arabia: Ideology and Behavior among the Elite* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 45–47, cited in Young, "Ka'ba," 286.



37. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa started on his first pilgrimage alone but soon joined a small caravan, and then a larger one. For diverse case-studies of male pilgrimage, see *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, eds. Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990) and *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1993).

38. The rules were laid out in the eleventh century by al-Māwardī. For a summary see 'Ankawi, "Pilgrimage to Mecca": 152–53 and Long, *Hajj Today*, pp. 14–16. For women's regulations see Muḥammad 'Aṣiyya Khamīs, *Fiqh al-nisā' fi al-ḥajj* (Cairo: Dar al-anṣār, 1980).

39. Young, "Ka'ba," 291; Peters, *Hajj*, pp. 135, 233–48.

40. Ibn Jubayr in Peters, *Hajj*, p. 135.

41. Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, vol. 1, p. 199.

42. William Foster (ed.), *The Red Sea and Adjacent Countries at the close of the seventeenth century as described by Joseph Pitts, William Daniel and Charles Jacques Poncet* (London: Hakluyt, 1949), p. 24.

43. Mirza Mohammad Hosayn Farahani. *A Shi'ite Pilgrimage to Mecca 1885–1886*, ed. and trans. Hafez Farmayan and Elton L. Daniel (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 210.

44. Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, vol. 1, p. 216.

45. Young, "Ka'ba," p. 290.

46. Foster, *Red Sea*, p. 29. In the nineteenth century, Richard Burton noted: "This is no longer the case. Few women ever enter the Ka'bah, on account of the personal danger they run there."

47. Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, vol. 1, p. 242.

48. Ibn Jobair, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 137–38/160–61; Ibn Jubayr in Peters, *Hajj*, p. 135.

49. Long, *Hajj Today*, pp. 17–18.

50. See Ibn Jubayr in Peters, *Hajj*, p. 135 and Anna Livia A.F. Beelaert, "The Ka'ba as a Woman: A Topos in Classical Persian Literature," *Persica* 13 (1989): 109–10.

51. Ibn Jobair, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 161.

52. Joseph Pitts in Foster, *Red Sea*, pp. 24–25.

53. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), cited in Young, "Ka'ba," p. 286.

54. Young, "Ka'ba," p. 286.

55. Roded, *Women*, p. 78. For the names of female scholars and transmitters of the holy tradition see esp. chs. 5 and 6.

56. See, for example, Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, ch. 5, "The Pilgrimage as a Matter of Foreign Policy," pp. 127–45.

57. 'Alī b. al-Hujwīrī, 'Uṭhmān al-Jullābī. *The Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1936, reprint 1976), p. 326.

58. For theoretical discussion of the ritual, I draw especially on Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), esp. ch. 1, and Ziauddin Sardar, "The Spiritual and Physical Dimensions of Hajj: A Systems Over-View," *Hajj Studies*, 1 (1978): 27–38.

59. Reid, "The Sufi Hajj and the Rakk Al-Maghribi," p. 24.

60. al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 327.

61. Ibn Jubayr in Peters, *Hajj*, p. 135.

62. Pitts, *Red Sea*, p. 23. Women's copious, public weeping observed by this writer on successive days at the Imām Riḍā sanctuary in Mashhad speaks of similar emotionalism among contemporary Shī'ites. For an anthropologist's testimony from Morocco, see Fatima Mernissi, "Women, Saints, and Sanctuaries," *Signs* 3.1 (1977): 101–111.

63. Anonymous, "Pilgrimage," in Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, p. 336; Petry, *Twilight of Majesty*, pp. 110 and 140; 'Ankawi, "Pilgrimage to Mecca": 150.

64. Anonymous, "Pilgrimage," in Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, p. 356. Long, *Hajj Today*, p. 19 also comments on the general excitement.

65. Ibn Jobair, *Voyages*, vol. 2, 138/161, and Ibn Jubayr in Peters, *Hajj*, p. 135.

66. Reid, *Sufi Hajj*, p. 14.

67. al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 329.

68. Morinis, "Introduction," p. 21.

69. Bertrandon in Peters, *Hajj*, p. 80.

70. Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājjib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig). A Turco-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, trans., with an introduction and notes by Robert Dankoff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 186–87.

71. Nineteenth-century observers found that Bedouin women did cover the face, in spite of the prohibition. Richard Burton described and sketched the straw contrivances they used not to be found in breach of the law. Richard F. Burton, *A Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), 2 vols., vol. 1, p. 141.

72. Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, vol. 1, p. 216.

73. "Pilgrimage," in Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, p. 352.

74. Burckhardt in Peters, *Hajj*, pp. 243–44.

75. Burckhardt in Peters, *Hajj*, p. 244.



## SULTĀN RAḌIYYA BINT ILTUTMIŞH

*Peter Jackson*

*Although some medieval Muslim women exercised political power behind the scenes, RaḌiyya bint Iltutmish was one of the few who dared to stand forth as actual ruler.*

When Shajarat al-Durr, the favorite wife of the late Sultān al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb, was proclaimed sultān of Egypt following the murder of the Sultān's son and successor, Tūrān Shāh, in 648/1250, the chronicler Ibn Wāṣil observed that the enthronement of a woman was without precedent in the Islamic world: there had been female regents recently in Aleppo, but they had not enjoyed the privilege of being named in the Friday prayers [*khutba*].<sup>1</sup> Yet Ibn Wāṣil was mistaken. Half a generation earlier, the princess RaḌiyya bint Iltutmish had reigned for three years or more (634–37/1236–40) as sultān of Delhi.<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that like Shajarat al-Durr, whose enthronement would be the work of the Turkish slave [Ar. *mamlūk*, *ghulām*; Pers. *banda*] commanders of her late husband al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb, RaḌiyya was brought to power by the Turkish slave officers of her father Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish.<sup>3</sup>

At Iltutmish's death in 633/1236, the aristocracy of the Delhi Sultānate comprised a motley assemblage of Ghūrī and other Tājīk (*i.e.*, non-Turkish) warriors and bureaucrats, amirs of the Khalaj (a people of Turkish, or at least Turkicized, stock whose homeland lay in the southern parts of modern Afghanistan), Turkish leaders of free status from Khwarazm and Transoxiana, and Turkish slave officers of the late sultān. Many of those in the former categories had fled into India during the invasion of Central Asia and the Iranian world by the Mongols under Čingiz Khān; but the Mongol campaigns were also responsible for an increase in the availability of slaves from among the Turkish tribes of the Caspian and Pontic

steppes, particularly Iltutmish's own people, the Ölberli.<sup>4</sup> Although Iltutmish had built up a corps of *ghulāms* (known, from the sultān's own *laqab*, as Shamsīs), promoting a few of them to the new dignity of *khān*, the evidence suggests that he had maintained a balance among the different elements within the ranks of the élite.<sup>5</sup> After his death, claims the later historian Ḍiyā' Baranī (c. 758/1357), his slaves profited from the weakness of Iltutmish's successors to eliminate their competitors.<sup>6</sup> The climax of this process was the transfer of the sovereignty in 664/1266 from Iltutmish's family, whom, for convenience, we may call the Shamsids, to Balaban-i Khwurd [the Lesser], himself an Ölberli ghulām of Iltutmish and the founder of a new dynasty.

Our source material for Raḍiyya's reign is fairly restricted. An early eighth/fourteenth-century chronicle from Baghdad, the *Hawādith al-Jāmi'a*, ascribed (probably in error) to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, furnishes a brief notice of Iltutmish's death, the reign of his son Firūz Shāh and Raḍiyya's accession in the year 635/1237–38.<sup>7</sup> For an identical passage (though omitting the date) Ibn Abī'l-Faḍā'il, a Coptic chronicler of the mid-eighth/fourteenth century, cites a now lost section of the *Ta'rikh Baghdād* of Ibn al-Sā'ī (d. 674/1276),<sup>8</sup> who is therefore in all probability the author of the *Hawādith* also. Ibn al-Sā'ī may well have derived his information from the caliphal envoy Ṣaghānī, who had brought Iltutmish a diploma [*manshūr*] and a standard from the 'Abbāsīd court in 626/1229, and who is known to have arrived back in Baghdad in 637/1239–40.<sup>9</sup> But after this date, accurate information on the Sultānate suddenly seems to stop being transmitted westwards, and the perspective on Delhi from elsewhere in the Islamic world is somewhat hazier. It is noteworthy that the list of Delhi Sultāns transmitted by the Ilkhānīd chronicler Waṣṣāf, writing in c. 702/1303, and by Ibn Abī'l-Faḍā'il himself omits Raḍiyya's two immediate successors, Mu'izz al-Dīn Bahrām Shāh (r. 637–39/1240–42) and 'Alā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd Shāh (r. 639–44/1242–46), and leaps from Raḍiyya to the relatively long reign of her youngest brother Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh (r. 644–64/1246–66).<sup>10</sup> But perhaps we should not read too much into this. The version of the Sultānate's history picked up by the Moroccan traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who spent some time in Delhi from 734/1333 onwards, contains an identical *lacuna*.<sup>11</sup> The omission of Raḍiyya's two successors may merely reflect, after all, the impact that a female sultān had on people in different parts of the *dār al-Islām*.

The only contemporary source for this era in which Turkish *ghulāms* gained ascendancy is a chronicle composed at Delhi. The *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* of the Ghūrī Minhāj-i Sirāj Jūzjānī, completed in 658/1260, is a general history of the eastern Islamic world, divided into twenty-three sections [*ṭabaqāt*], of which the final three are devoted respectively to the reigns of Iltutmish and his successors (21), the biographies of twenty-five Shamsī *ghulām* commanders (22), and the Mongol irruption into the lands of Islam (23). The history is dedicated to the reigning sultān, Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Iltutmish, and to Balaban, his deputy [*nā'ib*]. Although greatly superior to Baranī's work in its attention to detail, the *Ṭabaqāt* lacks the later chronicler's analytical quality. Jūzjānī's practice, moreover, is often to defer what were clearly important events from *ṭabaqa* 21 for notice in one of the biographies in *ṭabaqa* 22, and to describe the same episode in markedly distinct terms in different *ṭabaqāt*. Combined with a marked tendency to be merely allusive, this often serves to obfuscate important developments. A case in point is Iltutmish's designation of a successor.

Iltutmish's eldest son, Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd, who had been widely expected to succeed him, died prematurely in 626/1229;<sup>12</sup> and it was the next son, Rukn al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh, who ascended the throne within a few days of his father's death on 20 Sha'bān 633/29 April 1236. Following an expedition to Gwāliyōr in 630/1233, Fīrūz Shāh had been granted the *iqṭā'* of Lahore, at one time held by Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd. The impression that he was being groomed for the succession is fostered by the fact that he accompanied Iltutmish back to Delhi during the sultān's final illness; and Jūzjānī confirms that the eyes of the people were on the prince.<sup>13</sup> A work composed in Iltutmish's last years is dedicated to the sultān and Fīrūz Shāh jointly, as if the latter were heir-apparent.<sup>14</sup> All this seems fairly conclusive. But at another juncture Jūzjānī claims that in the wake of the Gwāliyōr expedition Iltutmish had marked out for the succession Raḍiyya, who was his eldest daughter (and hence possibly his firstborn child) and whose mother was his chief wife, and had even caused a diploma to be drawn up naming her as the next sultān. When certain officials objected, he allegedly predicted that none of his sons would be found worthy of the sovereignty.<sup>15</sup> We must bear in mind, however, that Jūzjānī had been left at Gwāliyōr and did not return to Delhi until 635/1238 (i.e., during Raḍiyya's own reign).<sup>16</sup>

he could not have witnessed this episode, and indeed he does not claim to have seen the diploma for Raḍiyya. In these circumstances, we have to consider the possibility that the story is apocryphal and was put about by those who made her sultān. Given its disparagement of the Shamsid princes (including the reigning sultān, Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh),<sup>17</sup> of course, the tale could have acquired a new significance at the time Jūzjānī was writing, when the replacement of Ilutmish's dynasty may already have been on the horizon.

During Fīrūz Shāh's brief reign, effective control of affairs was abandoned to his mother Shāh Terken, who seized the opportunity to pay off old scores in the *haram*, blinded and then put to death one of the sultān's half-brothers, and later sought to kill Raḍiyya in turn. These actions seem to have provoked widespread revolts.<sup>18</sup> One rising, in Awadh, was led by another brother, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad. A second comprised a number of Ilutmish's senior *amīrs*, notably the *ghulām* Kabīr Khān Ayāz, who had been in the late sultān's service from an early date;<sup>19</sup> the free Turkish *amīr* 'Alā' al-Dīn Jānī, bombastically described by Jūzjānī as 'prince of Turkistān';<sup>20</sup> and 'Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad Sālārī, probably a Ghūrī, who held the *iqṭā'* of Badā'ūn; while the *wazīr* Junaydī deserted Fīrūz Shāh's encampment to join them. The relationship, if any, between this insurrection and the activities of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad is unclear. Some of these *amīrs* may have had other motives for rebellion: it is possibly significant that both Kabīr Khān and Jānī had suffered a fall from favor in the last years of the previous reign, and that Sālārī, who under Ilutmish had occupied the important post of military chamberlain [*amīr-ḥājib*], is not so described in Fīrūz Shāh's era.<sup>21</sup> Nor were Kabīr Khān and his allies satisfied by a change of regime at Delhi. Even when Shāh Terken was overthrown in Delhi by yet another faction, and Fīrūz Shāh himself was arrested and put to death on 18 Rabī' I 634/19 November 1236, the insurgent *amīrs* refused to recognize Raḍiyya, who had been enthroned in his place, and besieged her in the capital. The new sultān eventually won over Sālārī and Kabīr Khān, and the rebellion collapsed: the *wazīr* Junaydī ended his days as a fugitive in the Sirmūr region of the sub-Himalaya.<sup>22</sup>

Fīrūz Shāh's enthronement appears to have been the work of the great *amīrs*, provincial governors and *iqṭā'*-holders [*muḥṭa's*] who were temporarily in Delhi, having accompanied Ilutmish back to

the capital from his last campaign.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, Raḍiyya's support came from two quarters: the citizens of Delhi, who brought down Shāh Terken, and the Shamsī ghulāms, who put Raḍiyya on the throne. A century later Ibn Baṭṭūṭa would hear how Raḍiyya appeared on the terrace of the royal palace [*dawlatkhāna*] and how the people rose in response to her impassioned appeal to her father's memory. Jūzjānī's more sober account says simply that they revolted and stormed the palace [*qaṣr*] when Shāh Terken attempted to arrest the princess.<sup>24</sup> Raḍiyya would continue to enjoy the support of Delhi's citizens, both during its investment by the rebel *amīrs*<sup>25</sup> and later, when her enemies had to lure her out of the capital in order to encompass her deposition (see below).

But those chiefly instrumental in Raḍiyya's enthronement were Iltutmish's slave officers, who at this juncture first surface as an identifiable force in the politics of the Sulṭānate. A group described by Jūzjānī as *turkān-i ḥaḍrat* [the Turks of the court, or 'the capital'], had manifested their disenchantment with Firūz Shāh at an early stage by leaving Delhi for Hindūstān, conceivably in a bid to join his brother in Awadh, but they were brought back; among them was Balaban 'the Lesser,' who underwent a brief spell of imprisonment.<sup>26</sup> When Firūz Shāh moved against Kabīr Khān and his confederates at Kuhrām [Ghuram], "the Turkish *amīrs* and personal slaves who were serving in the center" [*umarā-yi turk-u bandagān-i khāṣṣ ki dar khidmat-i qalb būdand*] mutinied at Tarā'in and put to death several Tājik bureaucrats, including a son of the *wazīr* Junaydī. And when the sulṭān turned back for the capital on the news of his mother's downfall, it was these same officers, called now 'the center [consisting] of Turkish *amīrs*' [*qalb-i umarā-yi turk*], who deserted him at Kīlōkhrī and recognized Raḍiyya.<sup>27</sup> During the siege of Delhi by the rebel *amīrs* Kabīr Khān, Sālārī and Junaydī, against whom her brother had headed his ill-starred expedition, Raḍiyya was vigorously supported by her father's Turkish *ghulāms* [*umarā-yi turk ki bandagān-i Shamsī būdand*].<sup>28</sup> The veteran Shamsī amīr, Nuṣrat al-Dīn \*Tāīsī, on whom Raḍiyya had conferred Awadh following the sudden (and unexplained) demise of her brother Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad, was on his way to her assistance when he was intercepted by the rebels and died in captivity. Among the defenders of Delhi were two other former slaves of Iltutmish: Ikhtiyār al-Dīn \*Altunapa, Iltutmish's chief canopy-bearer [*sar-i čatrdār*],



and 'Izz al-Dīn Balaban (later to be entitled *Kūshlū Khān*), who held the *iqṭā'* of Baran and was one of two Turkish commanders known to have been the ringleaders in the *émeute* at Tarā'in.<sup>29</sup>

According to the later author 'Iṣāmī, Firūz *Shāh* had failed to pay his father's *ghulāms* sufficient attention,<sup>30</sup> which doubtless indicates that his government relied excessively on the Tājik officials whom the *Shamsīs* so ruthlessly eliminated. During Raḍiyya's reign a number of *Ilutmish's* more junior household *ghulāms* obtained court office for the first time or received their first *iqṭā's*. Of Balaban 'the Lesser' we are told that at her accession he was still, as he had been under her father, a falconer [*khāṣadār*], and that she promoted him to chief huntsman [*amīr-i shikār*].<sup>31</sup> His brother Sayf al-Dīn Aybeg (the future *Kishli Khān*), who had simply been serving in the sultān's private household [*khidmat-i dargā-i khāṣṣ mikard*], became deputy commander of the guard [*nā'ib-i sar-i jāndār*].<sup>32</sup> Tāj al-Dīn Sanjar (later Arslan *Khān*), who had probably been purchased at the same time as Sayf al-Dīn, was like Balaban a falconer; but Raḍiyya made him cupbearer [*chāshnigīr*] and subsequently allotted him the *iqṭā'* of Balārām.<sup>33</sup> *Ghulāms* of a slightly more senior rank were also promoted. Baran was given in *iqṭā'* to \*Altunapa.<sup>34</sup> *Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Aytegin*, *muqṭa'* of Kūjāh and Nandana, was first transferred to Badā'un and then raised to the pivotal rank of *amīr-hājib*.<sup>35</sup> We are surely entitled to see in these appointments—in some cases, the first steps towards power by those who would dominate the 1250s—as a reward for bringing Raḍiyya to the throne.

But although several *Shamsī* slaves might thus have identified Raḍiyya's reign with a turning-point in their fortunes, the sultān nevertheless proved reluctant to rely exclusively on her father's *ghulāms*; and if her backers had expected her to remain in the shadows, they were to be disappointed. The rank of deputy commander-in-chief [*nā'ib-i lashgar*] had been bestowed on a Turkish officer, Sayf al-Dīn Aybeg-i \*Totaq, with the title of *Qutluḡ Khān*. On his death in 635/1237–38, however, the post was given not to a Turk but to the *Ghūrī malik* Quṭb al-Dīn Ḥasan b. 'Alī.<sup>36</sup> In 636/1238–39, moreover, Raḍiyya took the *iqṭā'* of Baran from Tāj al-Dīn Sanjar-i Qabaqulaq, who had replaced \*Altunapa when the latter was sent to command the crown fortress of Tabarhindh, and bestowed it on a son of Ḥasan Qarluq, the *Khwarazmian* ruler of Binbān, whom she had welcomed at her

court.<sup>37</sup> The transfer of *iqṭāʿ*s in this fashion was an obvious device to prevent the formation of local ties on the part of the grandees, and hence an important instrument of royal authority; it appeared all the more alarming, however, when the beneficiary happened to be an outsider. It has become obligatory at this juncture to exonerate Raḍiyya from the charge of improper relations with a different kind of outsider, the African [*Habashī*] slave *amīr* Jamāl al-Dīn Yāqūt, which was current when Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited Delhi a century later but which is unsupported by contemporary evidence.<sup>38</sup> But the question is irrelevant. What mattered was that Raḍiyya sought to develop a power-base of her own and neglected the Turkish slave élite which she and Firūz Shāh had inherited from their father. Her dependence on Yāqūt and his promotion to the rank of intendant of the imperial stables [*amīr-i ākhūr*] must be seen in this context. It is alleged not only to have offended the *amīr-hājib* Aytegin in particular but to have aroused the resentment of Turks, Ghūrīs, and Tājiks alike.<sup>39</sup> Raḍiyya's coinage, too, seems to testify to her emancipation. Initially coins struck at Delhi reflected the vulnerability of her regime, since they bore either her father's name alone or proclaimed Iltutmish as *Sultān al-ʿAzam* with Raḍiyya herself given the subordinate title of *Sultān al-Muʿazzam*. But the style changed, possibly again in 635/1237–38, when Raḍiyya alone was named on the coinage.<sup>40</sup>

Jūzjānī claims that the power of the Delhi state was extended under Raḍiyya, who was acknowledged "from the territory of Lakhnawtī [western Bengal] as far as Dīwal and Damrīla [lower Sind]." <sup>41</sup> In Sind royal authority does appear to have been reasserted. Here the news of Iltutmish's death had provoked an attack on Uchch by Ḥasan Qarluq's forces, which was beaten off by the *muqṭaʿ*, Sayf al-Dīn Aybeg. Aybeg then, in Jūzjānī's obscure phrasing, "grew powerful," possibly implying that he considered declaring his independence of Delhi. But he died in an accident shortly afterwards, and the next *muqṭaʿ* of Uchch, Hindū Khān, was Raḍiyya's appointee and was removed, significantly, only after her downfall.<sup>42</sup> In the east, however, Raḍiyya's reign may have witnessed a decline in the authority of the center. To secure the allegiance of the *muqṭaʿ* of Lakhnawtī, Toghan Khān, she felt obliged to confer on him a standard and a ceremonial parasol [*ḥatr*], and thereby virtually conceded his autonomy.<sup>43</sup>

There are signs, moreover, that in her dealings with independent Hindu powers Raḍiyya espoused retrenchment. Immediately following his appointment as *nā'ib-i lashgar* in 635/1238, Quṭb al-Dīn Ḥasan was despatched to Ranthanbōr, which had been under siege by the independent Chawhāns for some time. The Muslim garrison was evacuated and the fortifications were destroyed.<sup>44</sup> In *Shā'bān* of the same year, March–April 1238, forces under Sanjar-i Qabaqulaq, the *muqta'* of Baran, moved to Gwāliyōr. One motive for this expedition may possibly have been to remove the castellan [*kōtwāl*], who seems from his *nisba* to have been a kinsman of the fallen *wazīr* Junaydī. But it looks as if here too the garrison and the Muslim populace, including the chronicler Jūzjānī, who had been *qādī* of Gwāliyōr since its capture in 630/1233, were evacuated and escorted back to Delhi.<sup>45</sup> Although Jūzjānī's office of *qādī* was renewed, he was simultaneously given another position in the capital, which suggests that the Gwāliyōr post was *in partibus infidelium*. And later in the reign we find Temūr Khān, who held the *iqṭā'* of Qinnawj, heading a campaign "towards Gwāliyōr and Mālwa,"<sup>46</sup> indicating no doubt that the fortress had passed back into Hindu hands. Both Ranthanbōr and Gwāliyōr represented major conquests from the reign of the sultān's revered father Iltutmish;<sup>47</sup> and their loss will hardly have endeared her to his old *ghulāms*.

In these circumstances, and faced with the distressing signs of autonomy mentioned above, the *amīrs* grew restive. In 636/1238–39 Kabīr Khān, whose betrayal of his fellow-rebels had been rewarded with 'Alā' al-Dīn Jānī's *iqṭā'* of Lahore, rose in revolt there, but when in the following year the sultān in person moved against him, he was unable to retreat beyond the Chenāb and yielded. Raḍiyya treated him leniently, merely compelling him to exchange *iqṭā'*s with Qaraqush Khān, who had hitherto held Multān.<sup>48</sup> A more widespread conspiracy, however, was successful. The sultān was lured away from Delhi, where she was popular, by a rising at Tabarhindh, where \*Altunapa was in secret contact with the *amīr-hājib* Aytegin at court; Yāqūt was seized and put to death while the army was on the march, and Raḍiyya was incarcerated at Tabarhindh.<sup>49</sup> With the enthronement of one of her half-brothers as Mu'izz al-Dīn Bahrām Shāh on 27 Ramaḍān 637/21 April 1240, the *amīrs* took steps to secure a tighter grip on the government. Significantly, they gave their allegiance [*bay'at*] to Bahrām Shāh only when he had

agreed to the creation of the new office of 'viceroy' [*nā'ib*], which went to the *amīr-hājib* Aytegin.<sup>50</sup>

Although Aytegin was intended to act for just one year in view of the sultān's youth, he soon aroused the new sovereign's resentment, securing Bahrām Shāh's sister in marriage and arrogating to himself imperial prerogatives. He was murdered on the sultān's orders on 8 Muḥarram 638/30 July 1240, and the office of *nā'ib* lapsed.<sup>51</sup> This provoked an unsuccessful bid to restore Raḍiyya, whose jailer \*Altunapa reacted to the elimination of his ally Aytegin by releasing and marrying his prisoner.<sup>52</sup> Sālārī and Qaraqush Khān are alleged to have rallied to Raḍiyya's cause; but it is unclear whether they took part in the ensuing engagement. Near Tarā'īn, in the very region where in 587/1192 the Muslim forces had won the victory that gave them Delhi and where in 612/1216 her father Iltutmish had secured his precarious throne by overthrowing his overlord Tāj al-Dīn Yildiz, Raḍiyya and her husband, at the head of an army that included contingents from the Hindu tribes of the eastern Panjāb, were routed by the imperial army under Bahrām Shāh in person on 24 Rabī' I 638/13 October 1240. Shortly afterwards the couple were killed by Hindus while fleeing through the neighbourhood of Kaithal.<sup>53</sup>

Both Shajarat al-Durr and Raḍiyya owed their position in part to Turkish slave officers, first-generation converts from the steppe, who originated in a society where women enjoyed a wider latitude.<sup>54</sup> Jūzjānī notices that Raḍiyya discarded her female attire, emerged from purdah, and allowed herself to be seen in public riding on an elephant.<sup>55</sup> But however scandalous this might have been to the Tājik 'ulamā' of Delhi, it would surely have had less impact on the Turkish military. Although this is not the place to consider the persistence of non-Islamic attitudes within medieval Turkish Muslim societies,<sup>56</sup> it is worth noting that in the following century Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, recalling his journey among the nomads of the Pontic steppes, would comment on the greater freedom of Turkish women (including Muslim women), relative to those in the rest of Islamic society, and would observe that they did not wear the veil.<sup>57</sup> If we move from these relaxed attitudes, however, to the incidence of female sovereigns, the evidence tends to come not from the Turkish peoples, but from the Mongol-type peoples of the eastern steppes. On two occasions in the middle decades of the sixth/twelfth century, princesses ruled over the Qara-Khitan empire in Turkestan—itsself

founded by refugees from the Khitan [Liao] dynasty of northern China, who are generally regarded as being of proto-Mongol stock—with powers that seem to have amounted to more than merely those of a regent.<sup>58</sup> Now a number of Ilutmish's ghulāms—Aytegin and Qaraqush Khān for instance—were of Khitan or Qara-Khitan stock and may have been influenced by such precedents in their homeland.<sup>59</sup> But it should also be borne in mind that other peoples from whom Ilutmish drew his slave officers belonged themselves to 'Mongol' ethnic groups. The term 'Qipčaq' embraced a great many tribal groups between the Dnieper and the Irtysh, of whom some are known—like Ilutmish's own tribe, the Ölberli—to have dwelt at an earlier date in the eastern steppes.<sup>60</sup> One such group—the Bayaut branch of the Kimek [Yemek] people, whose pasturelands lay somewhere to the north of the Aral Sea and the Sir-daryā—had produced Terken Khātūn, the mother of the Khwārazmshāh Muḥammad, who until the Mongol conquest in 618/1221 ruled Khwārazm in virtual independence of her son, with the support of troops drawn from her own tribe.<sup>61</sup>

Raḍiyya may also have enjoyed a claim to legitimacy in the eyes of the Turks as Ilutmish's eldest child. Loyalty to the memory of their master was strong among his Turkish ghulāms. In the wake of Bahrām Shāh's overthrow in 639/1242, when the Shamsī slave 'Izz al-Dīn Balaban (shortly to receive the style of Kūshlū Khān) made a bid for the throne, he was frustrated by a group of his colleagues, who assembled at Ilutmish's grave.<sup>62</sup> It may be surmised that Raḍiyya had similarly provided a focus for such loyalty in 634/1236 and that she continued to do so even after her deposition and death, particularly since the Turkish ghulām élite came to enjoy a far more fraught relationship with her successor and her reign may accordingly have taken on the color of a golden age. Jūzjānī, writing in part for his benefactor Balaban, who—it should be recalled—had obtained his first important office during Raḍiyya's reign, does not hesitate to praise her qualities as a ruler, imputing to her the sole defect that she was not a man: it is striking that she is the only one of Ilutmish's dynasty whom he credits with being a war-leader [*lashgarkash*].<sup>63</sup> The fact that her tomb near Delhi had become a place of pilgrimage by the time Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited India<sup>64</sup> may testify less to the abiding respect in which she was held by the citizens of the capital than to

the efforts of successive governments to harness such sentiments to their own purposes.<sup>65</sup>

Raḍiyya's reign did not mark a transition, as did that of Shajarat al-Durr, between the era of a non-Turkish ruling dynasty and a Mamlūk regime.<sup>66</sup> Unlike the Ayyubids, Iltutmish himself had been a Turkish slave, and his *ghulāms* continued to jostle for power with Tājik and Ghūrī amīrs for some decades after Raḍiyya's overthrow. Nor did they ever succeed in monopolizing the principal offices of state as did their confrères in Egypt; there would be many reverses along the way before one of their number displaced the Shamsid dynasty and ascended the throne. Yet the period of Raḍiyya's rule did witness a major landmark in this process. If the *ghulāms* did not acquire a dangerous preponderance in the ranks of the élite, their heyday began with Raḍiyya. The intrusion of a greater number of Turkish slave commanders into *iqṭās* and the higher offices constitutes a half-way house between the first promotions under Iltutmish and the creation of the post of *nā'ib* at the accession of her brother Bahrām Shāh. That Raḍiyya, having contributed to the advancement of the Turkish *ghulāms*, then attempted vigorously (albeit unavailingly) to check them by forming an alternative power-base is perhaps irrelevant; though it gives the lie to Baranī's generalizations, noted above, about the feebleness of Iltutmish's dynasty.

#### NOTES

1. Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. arabe 1702, fol. 372v; trans. in Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 298. In this essay, an asterisk (\*) is used to indicate that we cannot be certain how to reconstruct the proper name in question.

2. For her reign, see generally A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, 2nd ed. (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1961), pp. 116–22; idem, "Sultānah Rāziah" [sic], *Indian Historical Quarterly* 16 (1940): 750–72; Mohammad Habib and Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, eds., *The Delhi Sultanat (A.D. 1206–1526), A Comprehensive History of India* 5 (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1970), pp. 237–44.

3. That both women were installed by Turks is noticed in Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Cambridge, Eng.: Polity Press, 1993), see pp. 89–99. For Shajarat al-Durr, see further Götz Schregle, *Die Sultānin von Ägypten. Šağarat ad-Durr in der arabischen*

*Geschichtsschreibung und Literatur* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1961), pp. 59–61.

4. Thomas T. Allsen, "Prelude to the Western campaigns: Mongol Military Operations in the Volga-Ural Region, 1217–37," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 16; Peter B. Golden, "Cumanica II. The Ölberli (Ölperli): The Fortunes and Misfortunes of an Inner Asian Nomadic Clan," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 6 (1986 [1988]): 26–28. The name of this tribe, which is given as 'LBRY by Jüzjānī, usually therefore appears as 'Ilbarī' in secondary works on Indian history.

5. Irfan Habib, "Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century," in Habib, ed., *Medieval India 1: Researches in the History of India 1200–1750* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 9–15.

6. Baranī, *Ta'rikh-i Firūz-Shāhī*, ed. Saiyid Aḥmad Khān (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1861–2), pp. 27–28: for a translation of the relevant passage, see Habib, "Formation," pp. 15–16. On the Turkish *ghulāms* in India, see more generally Gavin Hambly, "Who Were the Chihilgānī, the Forty Slaves of Sultan Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish of Delhi?" *Iran* 10 (1972): 57–62; Peter Jackson, "The Mamlūk Institution in Early Muslim India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1990): 340–58.

7. *Ḥawādith al-Jāmi'a*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād (Baghdad, 1351/1932), p. 104.

8. Ibn Abī'l-Faḍā'il, *al-Nahj al-Sadīd*, ed. and trans. Samira Kortantamer, *Ägypten und Syrien zwischen 1317 und 1341 in der Chronik des Mufaddal b. Abī'l-Faḍā'il*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen 23 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz, 1973), Arabic text pp. 28–29 (German trans., p. 107).

9. Khālil b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi'l-Wafayāt*, ed. Helmut Ritter et al., 12, Bibliotheca Islamica 61 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979), p. 241.

10. Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-Amṣār wa-Tajziyat al-A'ṣār*, lithograph ed. (Bombay, 1269/1853), p. 310; hence *Die Indiensgeschichte des Raṣīd ad-Dīn*, ed. and trans. Karl Jahn (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften 144, 1980), Persian text Tafel 22, Arabic text Tafel 57 (German trans., p. 48). Ibn Abī'l-Faḍā'il, Arabic text pp. 28–29 (German trans., p. 107).

11. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-Nuẓẓār*, ed. Ch. Defrémery and B.R. Sanguinetti, 4 vols. (Paris: Société Asiatique, 1853–58), vol. 3, pp. 167–69, and idem, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325–1354*, 4 vols. thus far with continuous pagination, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, Hakluyt Society, 2nd series, 110, 117, 141, 178 (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1958–94), vol. 3, pp. 631–32.

12. Jüzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāsirī*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Kabul, 1342–43 SH/1963–64), vol. 1, p. 447, and idem, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāsirī: A General History of the Muḥammadan Dynasties of Asia*, 2 vols. with continuous pagination, trans. H.G. Raverty (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1872–81), vol. 1, pp. 616–17.

13. Jüzjānī, vol. 1, pp. 454–55 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 630, 631).

14. Anonymous translation of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī's *Sirr al-Makhtūma*, Paris, BN ms. supp. persan 384, fol. 2r.
15. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 458 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 638–39); we are told at vol. 1, p. 456 (trans. p. 635), that Raḍiyya was his eldest daughter. Nizami (in Habib and Nizami, *The Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 230–31) believes that Ilutmish originally designated Raḍiyya, but then changed his mind and groomed Firūz Shāh instead. Similarly Habibullah, *The Foundation*, p. 115, sees Firūz Shāh's enthronement as "technically a supersession of Raziah."
16. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, pp. 448–49, 460 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 620, 643–44); and see below.
17. As Nizami points out, in Habib and Nizami, *The Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 230–31, n. 84; cf. also his *On History and Historians of Medieval India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983), p. 84. It is unfortunate that Nizami's insight is undermined in *The Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 253, 256, by his assertion, on the less reliable testimony of the mid-eighth/fourteenth-century author 'Iṣāmī, that Maḥmūd Shāh was not Ilutmish's youngest son, born after his namesake's death, as Jūzjānī tells us, but the old sulṭān's grandson.
18. For Shāh Terken's tyranny and the revolts, see Jūzjānī, vol. 1, pp. 455–56 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 632–34).
19. He was purchased from the heirs of Naṣir al-Dīn Ḥusayn, chief huntsman [*amīr-i shikār*] to Tāj al-Dīn Yildiz of Ghazna, on the former's murder: Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 5 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, pp. 724–25). This event, which coincided with the murder of Yildiz's *wazīr*, can be dated to 611/1214–15: Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 413 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 504–505); Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-Ta'rikh*, ed. C.J. Tornberg, *Ibn al-Athiri Chronicon quod perfectissimum scribitur*, 12 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1851–76), vol. 12, p. 199, repr. with different pagination (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1385–87/1965–67), vol. 12, pp. 304–305.
20. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 452 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, p. 626).
21. For Kabīr Khān and Jānī, see Jūzjānī, vol. 2, pp. 6, 9 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, pp. 726, 731–32). For Sālārī, see Habib, "Formation," p. 13; also 'Awfī, "Preface," *Jawāmi' al-Hikāyāt*, 1, ed. Muḥammad Mu'īn, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1340 SH/1961), p. 12.
22. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, pp. 458–59 (the text reads Sirhind for Sirmūr; but cf. British Library ms. Add. 26189, fol. 182v, and Raverty's trans., vol. 1, pp. 640–41).
23. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 455 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 631–32). Habibullah, "Sulṭānah Rāziah," p. 757, and *The Foundation*, p. 115.
24. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, vol. 3, pp. 166–67 (trans. Gibb, vol. 3, p. 631). Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 456 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 636).
25. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 6 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 726).
26. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, pp. 48–49, 51 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, pp. 802, 805).
27. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, pp. 456–57 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 634–35, 636).



28. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 36 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 779). At vol. 1, p. 458, Jūzjānī calls Raḍiyya's adherents simply *umarā-yi turk*.

29. For \*Tāisi, see Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 458, and vol. 2, p. 13 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 639–40; vol. 2, pp. 735–36); the origin of this name is obscure. For \*Altunapa, see Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 21 (trans. vol. 2, p. 748, is misleading, since Raverty renders *dar-bandān* as 'imprisonment' rather than 'siege'). The name is spelled 'LTWNYH in the printed text [Raverty's 'Altūniāh'], but I suspect we have here a form composed of Turkish *altun*, 'golden,' and *oba*, 'clan,' or *apa*, 'ancestor,' and found among the Qipčaq/Polovtsi: *Pol'noe sobranie russkikh letopisei, 1. Laurent' evskaia letopis'*, 2nd ed. (Leningrad: Akademiya Nauk, 1926–28), col. 278; Sir Gerard Clauson, *An etymological dictionary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 5, 131. Kūshlū Khān: Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 36 (garbled in Raverty's trans., vol. 2, p. 779): he was briefly taken prisoner by the insurgent *amīrs* while fighting for Raḍiyya outside the capital.

30. 'Iṣāmī, *Futūḥ al-Salāṭīn*, ed. A.S. Usha (Madras: Madras University Islamic Series, 9, 1948), p. 130, and trans. A. Mahdi Husain, 3 vols. with continuous pagination (Aligarh Muslim University Press: Aligarh, 1967–77), vol. 2, p. 248 (on which n. 1 erroneously cites as examples nobles who were not slaves).

31. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, pp. 48, 51 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, pp. 802, 806). The meaning of *khāṣadār* was established by S.H. Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History*, 2 vols. (Bombay, 1939–57), vol. 2, pp. 67–68.

32. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 46 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, pp. 797–98).

33. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 34 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, pp. 766–67, reading *jāmadār* for *khāṣadār*). For the date at which Iltutmish had purchased them, see Jackson, "The *Mamlūk* institution," p. 347 and n. 35.

34. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 21 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 748).

35. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 460, and vol. 2, p. 22 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, p. 642; vol. 2, p. 750). For *ay*, 'moon,' and *tegin*, 'prince,' see Jean Sauvaget, "Noms et surnoms des Mamelouks," *Journal Asiatique* 238 (1950): 31–58, no. 41.

36. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 459 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 641–42). Sayf al-Dīn's sobriquet, which is given as BHTW in Ḥabībī's text and 'Bihaq' by Raverty, appears as TTQ in ms. Add. 26189, fols. 182v, 183r. This looks like the Tu. title *totaq*, or conceivably a nickname, *tutuq*, 'tongue-tied': Clauson, p. 453; Denis Sinor, "The Turkish title *tutuq* rehabilitated," in *Turcica et Orientalia. Studies in Honor of Gunnar Jarring* (Istanbul: Transactions of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul 1, 1988), pp. 145–48. For his epitaph, from Abūhar, see *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 4 (1970–71): 18–19, 119.

37. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 21 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 748), for \*Altunapa; vol. 2, p. 25–26 (trans. vol. 2, p. 754), for Sanjar-i Qabaqulaq; vol. 2, p. 162 (trans. vol. 2, p. 1129), for Ḥasan Qarluq's son. It is clear from ms. Add. 26189, fol. 186v, that Tāj al-Dīn Sanjar's sobriquet, given as 'Qīqluq' by Raverty, is to be read *qabaqulaq*, 'protruding ears': Clauson, pp. 580–81, 621; Jackson, "The *Mamlūk* institution," p. 342, n.7. On Qarluq's

principality, see Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, "The Qarlugh Kingdom in North-Western India during the Thirteenth Century," *Islamic Culture* 54 (1980): 75–91. Habibullah, in "Sulṭānah Rāziah," pp. 762–64, speculated that Qarluq was making an unsuccessful bid to involve Raḍīyya in a joint anti-Mongol front.

38. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, vol. 3, p. 167 (trans. Gibb, vol. 3, p. 631). He heard that Yāqūt had been Raḍīyya's slave. The statement of 'Iṣāmī, p. 134 (trans. Husain, vol. 2, p. 253), that Yāqūt was a slave of *Iltutmish* and had served both that sulṭān and Fīrūz *Shāh* as *amīr-i ākhūr*, was accepted by Habibullah, "Sulṭānah Rāziah," p. 766; but Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 24 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 752), seems to suggest that Badr al-Dīn Sonqur held this office from *Iltutmish*'s reign into that of Raḍīyya. See also Habib and Nizami, *The Delhi Sultanat*, p. 240, n. 21.

39. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 460, and vol. 2, pp. 21, 22–23 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 642–43; vol. 2, pp. 748, 750). Habib and Nizami, *The Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 240, 243. Ms. Add. 26189, fol. 183r, gives Yāqūt the title 'chief *amīr*' [*amīr al-umarā*], a phrase omitted in Ḥabībī's edition of Jūzjānī (vol. 1, p. 460).

40. H. Nelson Wright, *The Coinage and Metrology of the Sulṭāns of Dehli* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 40 (nos. 161, 161A). Coins struck in distant Lakhnawtī carried Raḍīyya's name alone throughout, apparently, see p. 41 (nos. 161B–61D).

41. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 459 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, p. 641).

42. The phrase *qūi-yi ḥāl gash*, found in ms. Add. 26189, fol. 199r, is omitted in Ḥabībī's edition, vol. 2, p. 9, but cf. Raverty's trans. in Jūzjānī, vol. 2, pp. 730–31. Hindū *Khān*, Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 19 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 746).

43. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 14 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 737). For *toghan*, 'falcon,' see Sauvaquet, no. 140.

44. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, pp. 459–60 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, p. 642).

45. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 460, and vol. 2, pp. 25–26 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 643–44; vol. 2, pp. 754–55). The evacuees included Muslim envoys from the Mongols of the Qipčaq steppe, who were removed to Qinnawj [Kanauj]: *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 214 (trans. vol. 2, p. 1285, where Raverty's phrase "In the end this sovereign was put in seclusion" is a misunderstanding of Jūzjānī's remarks about the envoys). - rem

46. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, p. 17 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 743).

47. See Jūzjānī's account of the two campaigns: *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 445–46, 448–49 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 610–11, 619–21).

48. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 460, and vol. 2, pp. 6, 20 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 644–45; vol. 2, pp. 726–27, 747). For *qaraqush*, 'eagle,' see Clauson, p. 670.

49. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, pp. 460–61, and vol. 2, p. 21 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, p. 645, vol. 2, pp. 748–49).

50. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 463 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, p. 649).

51. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, pp. 463–64, and vol. 2, p. 23 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 649–51; vol. 2, p. 751).

52. Professor Nizami (in Habib and Nizami, *The Delhi Sultanat*, p. 242) believes that \*Altunāpa turned against the new regime because he had been double-crossed by Aytegin; but the chronology suggests, in my view, that he revolted on the news of Aytegin's murder.

53. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 462, and vol. 2, p. 22 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 647–48; vol. 2, p. 749). For the support of the Hindu tribes, see "Iṣāmī," in p. 139 (trans. Husain, vol. 2, p. 259).

54. Schregle, pp. 75–76; see also Golden's comments in "Cumanica II. The Ölberli," p. 27.

55. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 460 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 643–44). This is mentioned also by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, vol. 3, p. 167 (trans. Gibb, vol. 3, p. 631).

56. See J.P. Roux, "Recherche des survivances pré-islamiques dans les textes turcs musulmans: le 'Bābar-Nāme,'" *Journal Asiatique* 256 (1968): 247–61, and "Recherche des survivances pré-islamiques dans les textes turcs musulmans: le *Kitab-i Dede Qorqut*," *Journal Asiatique* 264 (1976): 35–55.

57. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, vol. 2, pp. 377–79 (trans. Gibb, vol. 2, pp. 480–81); see also vol. 2, p. 384 (trans. Gibb, vol. 2, p. 483), on the public appearances of the wives of the *Khān* Özbeg.

58. Karl A. Wittfogel and Fêng Chia-shêng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao 907–1125*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, new series, 36 [for 1946] (Philadelphia, 1949), pp. 643, 644, 646; see also the remarks about the Liao rulers in China at pp. 199–202. For the role of women in Mongol society, see Paul Ratchnevsky, "La condition de la femme mongole au XII<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," in Walther Heissig et al., eds., *Tractata Altaica Denis Sinor....dedicata* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976), pp. 509–30, especially pp. 517–23.

59. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, pp. 19, 22 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, pp. 746, 749). The point was well made by Habibullah, "Sulṭānah Rāziah," p. 752; although the examples that follow from the Islamic world (pp. 752–53) include women, like Ḍayfa *Khātūn* of Aleppo, who were merely regents.

60. Omeljan Pritsak, "Two migratory movements in the Eurasian steppe in the 9th–11th centuries," in *Proceedings of the 26th International Congress of Orientalists, New Delhi 1964* 2 (New Delhi, 1968): 157–63. Golden, "Cumanica II. The Ölberli," pp. 10–22.

61. See W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed., ed. C.E. Bosworth, Gibb Memorial Series, new series, 5 (London: Luzac, 1968), pp. 349, 428; Paul Pelliot and Louis Hambis, *Histoire des campagnes de Gengis Khan. Cheng-Wou Ts'in-tcheng Lou* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1951), pp. 89–97; her clan may have been linked with the Ölberli (see pp. 107–08). The sources are Juwaynī, *Ta'rikh-i Jahān-Gushā*, ed. Mīrẓā Muḥammad Qazwīnī, 3 vols, Gibb Memorial Series, 16 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, and London: Luzac, 1912–37), vol. 2, pp. 198–99, and trans. J.A. Boyle, *The History of the World-*

*Conqueror*, 2 vols. with continuous pagination (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), vol. 2, pp. 465–66; and Nasawī, *Histoire du Sultan Djelal ed-Din Mankobirti*, ed. and trans. Octave Houdas (Paris: École des langues orientales vivantes, 3<sup>e</sup> série, 9 and 10, 1891–95), text p. 42, trans. pp. 72–73.

62. Jūzjānī, vol. 2, pp. 36–37 (trans. Raverty, vol. 2, p. 780).

63. Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 457 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, pp. 637–38).

64. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, vol. 3, p. 169 (trans. Gibb, vol. 3, p. 632). For the tomb, see also Shams-i Sirāj ‘Afif, *Ta’rikh-i Firūz-Shāhī*, ed. Maulavi Vilayat Husain (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1888–91), p. 134. The district was included in the new settlement of Firūzābād founded by Firūz Shāh Tughluq. Raḍiyya’s brothers Rukn al-Dīn and Mu’izz al-Dīn were buried at Malikpūr: Firūz Shāh, *Futūḥāt-i Firūz-Shāhī*, ed. Shaikh Abdur Rashid (Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1954), p. 13, and trans. N.B. Roy, “The Victories of Sultān Firūz Shāh of the Tughluq Dynasty,” *Islamic Culture* 15 (1941): 460.

65. There seems to be a parallel with the grave of Iltutmish’s rival Tāj al-Dīn Yildiz at Badā’un, which had become a focus of pilgrimage by the time Jūzjānī wrote. See Jūzjānī, vol. 1, p. 413 (trans. Raverty, vol. 1, p. 506). Here again we have a monarch to whose overthrow the regime at Delhi was indebted for its very survival, but whose memory—in this case as the senior *ghulām* of Mu’izz al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sām, the Ghūrid conqueror of northern India, and later the bulwark of Muslim India against the Khwārazmshāh—commanded reverence. For Yildiz as the opponent of the Khwārazmshāh, see Peter Jackson, “The Fall of the Ghurid Dynasty,” in *Festschrift for Professor C.E. Bosworth* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).

66. See Schregle, p. 143.



## TIMŪRID WOMEN: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

*Priscilla P. Soucek*

*This chapter focuses on the lives of Tīmūr's elder sister, his principal wife, and his favorite daughter-in-law.*

Information about the lives, personalities, and importance of women within the Tīmūrid dynasty comes mainly from laconic references in chronicles of the period, but if such comments are linked together and placed within a broader context, patterns emerge. Some Tīmūrid practices have close parallels to those followed by the Čingizid Mongols, whereas others reflect Islamic traditions current in the cities of Central Asia. In general, Turko-Mongol customs are strongest in the realm of personal life, and Islamic attitudes most striking in the area of architectural patronage.

Tīmūr is the best documented member of the dynasty, and sources provide information about his sisters, wives, daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters. The most important texts are his biographies, the *Zafar-nāmas*, written by Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī and Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, although the comments of foreign observers such as the Spanish envoy Ruy González de Clavijo, and the Syrian Ibn 'Arabshāh, help to complete the picture.<sup>1</sup> For the period after Tīmūr's death, the *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh* of Ḥāfiẓ Abrū has the fullest treatment.<sup>2</sup> Genealogical tables of the Tīmūrid dynasty provide lists of the wives and concubines of various family members.<sup>3</sup> Also, a few historically identifiable depictions of Tīmūrid women appear in the illustrated manuscripts of the period. In addition to these literary sources, architectural monuments erected for Tīmūrid women provide insight into their taste and aspirations.

From these materials it is possible to construct biographies of prominent Tīmūrid women which can serve as the basis for a broader

consideration of both the position they occupied within the dynasty and of their role in the cultural and artistic history of the region. This essay will sketch the lives of three women: Tīmūr's elder sister, Qutlugh Tarkhān Aghā bint Taraghay, his principal wife, Sarāy Mulk Khānīm bint Qazan Khān, and his daughter-in-law, Sawīn Bīg bint Aq Šūfī, known as Khānzāda. All of them enjoyed Tīmūr's affection and all were patrons of architecture; buildings erected by two of them are still extant.

Although Tīmūrid households usually contained numerous wives, concubines, and children, as well as many retainers, a hierarchy existed among the women, and their status reflected both their ancestry and other more personal factors.<sup>4</sup> A number of Tīmūrid wives were daughters of important *amīrs* from Transoxiana, but special importance was attached to women of Čingizid descent, who formed an aristocracy within the family at large. The Čingizid wives of Tīmūr, and of his sons Jahāngīr and Mīrānshāh, not only gave their husbands increased prestige and entitled them to use the special title *gūregen* [son-in-law], but they themselves were treated with particular deference by the entire family.<sup>5</sup>

The prestige of these wives is also reflected in the care with which their lives were chronicled by Tīmūrid historians. Tīmūr's Čingizid wife, Sarāy Mulk Khānīm, a descendant of Čaghatāy Khān b. Čingiz Khān, was a dominant force in family life; Khānzāda, descended from Juči b. Čingiz Khān and married successively to Tīmūr's sons Jahāngīr and Mīrānshāh, was both independent-minded and influential.<sup>6</sup> The sparse documentation of Ulūgh Beg's reign may explain the paucity of references to his Čingizid wife, Akī Sultān Khānīka, whose father, Sultān Maḥmūd Khān, a descendant of Ögedey, had served as titular ruler of Tīmūr's domains.<sup>7</sup>

The general roles assigned to women in Tīmūr's family appear similar to those ascribed to females in other nomadic Mongol and Turkic groups of eastern Iran and Central Asia. Women were expected not only to care for children, but also to be able to manage other aspects of family life in the absence of their husbands, fathers, or brothers. Their duties included overseeing the production or procurement of food and clothing needed by the household.<sup>8</sup> Given their broad responsibilities, it is logical that such women also exercised considerable personal freedom.

In the *yasa* of Čingiz Khān, men were enjoined to seek and respect the advice of their wives, and indeed high-ranking Mongol women were expected to assume governmental and military responsibilities in the event of their husband's absence or death, acting as regents until a male successor had been chosen.<sup>9</sup> Although there are no exact Tīmūrid equivalents to the Mongol queens Töregene, who ruled after the death of Ögedey, or Oghul-Qaymish, who held power after the demise of Güyük, some Tīmūrid women were evidently consulted about affairs of state. This is best documented for the tumultuous period following Tīmūr's death when his principal wives had frequent meetings with his most trusted *amīrs* in order to chart a proper course of action. In this case, however, the *amīrs* seem to have reached major decisions by themselves and then turned to Tīmūr's principal wives primarily to gain their approval and cooperation.<sup>10</sup> Women who sought to dominate their husbands and to become *de facto* rulers, for example Shād-i Mulk Agha, the wife of Khalīl Sulṭān b. Mīrānshāh, are criticized in the sources.<sup>11</sup> None of Tīmūr's wives appears to have exercised direct governmental or military authority, but within the sphere of their responsibility, texts do confirm the prestige, independence, and financial power of high-ranking Tīmūrid women.

In Tīmūr's own case, his elder sister, Qutluḡ Tarkhān Agha (d. 1383), managed the household after the death of his mother and it was to her that Tīmūr turned for support and comfort in various crises.<sup>12</sup> In 763/1362, when his fortunes were at a low ebb, he took refuge for forty-eight days in her Samarkand residence.<sup>13</sup> She also comforted Tīmūr in 783/1381 when sorrow over the death of his young daughter Akah Bikī Taghay-Shāh had caused him to neglect affairs of state. She urged him to assuage his grief by invading Mazandaran and ending a local revolt there.<sup>14</sup> Although Qutluḡ Tarkhān's exhortations helped to rouse Tīmūr to action, when she herself died in 785/1383 Tīmūr's grief was so extreme that a deputation of religious leaders felt obliged to remind him of the need to accept her death as God's will. After an impressive funeral, she was buried at Samarkand "in the vicinity of the grave of Qutham ibn [al-] 'Abbās" in the funerary complex now known as the 'Shāh-i Zinda."<sup>15</sup>

Within her family, Qutluḡ Tarkhān Agha appears to have embodied the steppe tradition of forceful women, but in her personal piety she followed Islamic precedents. She was evidently a major



patron of religious architecture and is said to have built *madrasas*, *khānaqās*, and shrines “from her own funds,” but the only surviving example is the tomb at Samarkand in which she is buried beside her daughter, *Shād-i Mulk Agha*, who had died in 773/1371.<sup>16</sup>

This impressive structure, probably constructed during the 1370's, is one of the earliest surviving Tīmūrid monuments. It is completely sheathed, internally and externally, with glazed ceramic revetments which contain the signatures of two craftsmen, Zayn al-Dīn and *Shams al-Dīn*.<sup>17</sup> In technical features and design these tiles resemble those found on earlier fourteenth-century Samarkand structures suggesting that these two craftsmen were locally trained.<sup>18</sup> This monument is also notable for the programmatic character of its inscriptions, which draw on metaphors linking women and gardens, and for the careful coordination between these inscriptions and the monument's decoration.<sup>19</sup>

During Tīmūr's frequent military campaigns, his highest-ranking wives supervised the affairs of his extended family, which also included many members of the families of his children and grandchildren. They established and maintained encampments and supervised the travel of both the family and of their many retainers.<sup>20</sup> Even later generations of Tīmūrid women appear to have been capable of supervising the affairs of an encampment. When Tīmūr's grandson, Iskandar Sulṭān b. 'Umar *Shaykh*, first moved to Fars, his wife, Bikī (or Bikīsī) Sulṭān bint Mīrānshāh ibn Tīmūr, was sent ahead to Yazd to set up his *ordu* [encampment] on her own.<sup>21</sup>

Over the years Tīmūr is known to have had eighteen wives and more than twenty concubines, but only a few of them are discussed in chronicles.<sup>22</sup> However, the activities of his Čingizid wife, Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm* bint Qazan *Khān*, are recorded in more detail. She was one of three women whom Tīmūr appropriated in 771/1369 from the harem of Amir Ḥusayn, after the latter's defeat and death.<sup>23</sup> The fact that Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm* entered Tīmūr's life as booty in no way decreased her prestige, and the coincidence of their marriage with Tīmūr's designation as the ruler of Transoxiana served to strengthen and legitimize his victory.

As a descendant of Čingiz *Khān*'s son Čaghatāy and the daughter of the last effective ruler of that line, Qazan *Khān* (d. 747/1346–47), Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm* enabled Tīmūr to include the Mongol title *güregen* [son-in-law] in his titulature. Because her father was

deceased, this title is literally nonsensical; its practical value, however, is indicated by the way in which it was used by Tīmūr. Tīmūr exercised power in the name of a Čingizid whom he had installed as figurehead so that his decrees were presented as orders of this nominal ruler with which Tīmūr concurred: "By the order of Suyurghatmish Khān [and] Amīr Tīmūr *gūregen*, our word..."<sup>24</sup> Tīmūr's two successive *khāns*, Suyurghatmish and the latter's son Sulṭān Maḥmūd, were descended from Čingiz Khān through Ögedey, whereas Sarāy Mulk Khānīm was related to Čaghatāy b. Čingiz, so that Tīmūr's appellation as *gūregen* appears to have given him a broader 'in-law' status within the extended family of Čingiz Khān's descendants than the term 'son-in-law' would suggest. This interpretation of *gūregen* would parallel earlier usage by the Čingizids when royal sons-in-law were incorporated into the ruling family with a distinct status just below that of the royal princes.<sup>25</sup>

Tīmūrid historians sometimes specify that Sarāy Mulk Khānīm is 'bint Qazan Khān,' thereby stressing her lineage, but more often she is described as the *bānū-yi kubrā* or *bānū-yi-‘uḡmā* [principal wife].<sup>26</sup> In most discussions of Tīmūr's household, she is the first wife to be cited, a precedence which appears to reflect her dominant role in family life.<sup>27</sup> It was she who notified Tīmūr on the birth of his children or grandchildren; on important occasions, such as weddings or victory celebrations, she organized ceremonial banquets [*tūy-i sangīn*] for the whole family.<sup>28</sup> In 806/1404, at the conclusion of Tīmūr's final campaign in the west, she supervised the transportation of his war trophies and household baggage to Samarkand.<sup>29</sup>

Although Tīmūrid historians refer to Sarāy Mulk Khānīm as *mahd-i a'lā* [the exalted cradle], an epithet usually reserved for women who have borne children, no such children are mentioned in the sources.<sup>30</sup> She did, however, become a 'foster-mother' to several of Tīmūr's progeny. Her role in that regard stems from the Tīmūrid custom of entrusting the care and education of many sons and even some daughters not to their birth mother but to more senior women within the family. Princes had the most complete set of surrogate parents. Yazdī notes that Ibrāhīm Sulṭān b. Shāh Rukh was entrusted to three individuals: a wet-nurse, an *atabeg*, and one of Tīmūr's senior wives, Tūmān Āghā; other *shāhzādas* were probably raised in a similar fashion.<sup>31</sup>

These artificial 'families' were intended to nurture and educate the children from infancy to adulthood. Bonds between the boy and his 'foster-mother' and the boy and his *atabeg* often persisted into adulthood. In conformity with a long-established Turkic tradition, the *atabeg's* role was to supervise the child's military and practical education, and frequently he continued to play that role after the youth had been assigned to rule a particular territory.<sup>32</sup> Bonds with the 'foster-mother' could also continue even after the youth's marriage, which among the Tīmūrids often occurred in early adolescence.<sup>33</sup> Usually, each *atabeg* had only one charge, but 'foster-mothers' were sometimes entrusted simultaneously with children from different parents. The unhappiness of 'Abd al-Laṭīf b. Ulūgh Beg with the preferential treatment given to his cousin 'Alā' al-Dawla by Gawhar Shād, who was both his grandmother and 'foster-mother,' demonstrates that this arrangement could lead to conflicts.<sup>34</sup>

Sarāy Mulk Khānīm was given charge of Tīmūr's youngest son, Shāh Rukh, and several of his grandchildren, including Ulūgh Beg b. Shāh Rukh and Khalīl Sulṭān b. Mīrānshāh, as well as three of 'Umar Shaykh's children, 'Alī, who died in infancy, and two daughters, Zubayda Sulṭān and Bābā Bīkī.<sup>35</sup> Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī describes the celebratory feasts which occurred at Tīmūr's encampment in 786/1384 when Mīrānshāh's wife Khānzāda entrusted her two month old son, Sulṭān Khalīl, to Sarāy Mulk Khānīm. Shortly afterwards, Khānzāda returned to Herat and Sarāy Mulk Khānīm went to Samarkand, presumably with the infant Sulṭān Khalīl.<sup>36</sup>

Comments by Tīmūrid authors suggest that deep emotional bonds could develop between children and their 'foster-mothers.' Several incidents illustrate the importance of such links between Sarāy Mulk Khānīm and her young charges. While Tīmūr's progeny were too young to join the army in combat, she often escorted them between Samarkand and Tīmūr's various encampments.<sup>37</sup> Family reunions of this type were marked by feasts and the exchange of gifts.<sup>38</sup> In 795/1393, Tīmūr allowed Shāh Rukh and the other princes to travel from Isfahan to Hamadan to meet Sarāy Mulk Khānīm and Tūmān Agha.<sup>39</sup>

Sarāy Mulk Khānīm also used her influence with Tīmūr to protect various family members from his wrath. In 806/1404 she helped Abū Bakr b. Mīrānshāh plead for better treatment of his disgraced

father, Mīrānshāh, a request which led Tīmūr to grant his son a retinue, some horses, and a substantial sum of cash.<sup>40</sup> Her affection for Khalil Sultān b. Mīrānshāh led her to intervene when Tīmūr ordered the execution of Shād-i Mulk Agha, the woman whom Khalil Sultān had secretly married while Tīmūr was on campaign. Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's stratagem was to claim that Shād-i Mulk was pregnant with Khalil Sultān's child. Tīmūr agreed to cancel her death sentence if she were entrusted to his wife, Tūmān Agha, until the child was born. After that, Tūmān Agha would take custody of the child and Shād-i Mulk would be given to the black eunuchs who guarded Tīmūr's harem, presumably because they could be trusted to prevent Khalil Sultān from meeting her. Tīmūr accepted her suggestions and Shād-i Mulk's life was spared.<sup>41</sup>

Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's importance in Tīmūr's family was reflected in the scale of her compound in the Tīmūrid encampment and the rich furnishings of her private tent as well as by the size of her retinue and the ceremonial with which she was attended. Clavijo, who witnessed her participation in festivities at Samarkand in 1404, describes at length her grand entrance to a formal audience presided over by Tīmūr. She was preceded by eunuchs who shielded her head with an umbrella and followed by a multitude of female attendants. They carried the train of her red silk robe and steadied her towering head-dress with its feathers and jewels. Even after she had been seated on a cushioned platform just below that occupied by Tīmūr, attendants remained by her side to support her head-dress.<sup>42</sup>

Although Sarāy Mulk Khānīm never exercised political power, she did possess some of the attributes usually reserved for male members of a dynasty in the Islamic world. Clavijo mentions that a ceremonial umbrella was held over her head, a token of respect also accorded to wives of Mongol rulers.<sup>43</sup> Along with other high-ranking Tīmūrid women she entertained male and female envoys at her own receptions and distributed robes-of-honor to her guests.<sup>44</sup> During such a gathering Clavijo was allowed to visit her private tent which was furnished with exotic booty from Tīmūr's various conquests. It had silver-plated doors embellished with enamel portraying Christian themes, which must have once belonged to a church and were said to come from booty seized by the Tīmūrid army at the Ottoman capital, Bursa. Other items such as a golden chest containing gem-

encrusted drinking vessels and a golden tree with enameled birds may also have been relics of Tīmūr's conquest of Anatolia.<sup>45</sup> Tīmūr's treasury in Samarkand is said to have contained objects plundered from many defeated rulers, and he was in the habit of distributing such curiosities among his family members and military commanders. Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's role as guardian of his booty caravan must have given her ample opportunity to select items of personal interest.<sup>46</sup>

Ironically, Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's efforts to help Khalīl Sulṭān may have been to her own detriment. Her domination of Tīmūr's extended family appears to have ended abruptly when Khalīl Sulṭān ibn Mīrānshāh seized power in Samarkand some months after Tīmūr's death. Among the Tīmūrids, the wives and concubines of a deceased family member were remarried within the family, but Khalīl Sulṭān gave Tīmūr's wives and concubines to a motley assortment of men of inferior status, treating them like booty from a defeated rival rather than as members of his own family.<sup>47</sup> Yazdī characterizes these marriages as the casting of "fairy-like beauties into the maw of demons." He blames Khalīl's mistreatment of women, who were "like a mother to him," on the jealousy of Shād-i Mulk and deplores the fact that Tīmūr's death-sentence on her had not been carried out.<sup>48</sup> Historians provide no details about Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's fate; the date of her death is unknown.

Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's personal wealth is impossible to estimate, but the opulence of her personal compound within the Tīmūrid encampment suggests that it was considerable. Among the Mongols it was customary for important women to be active in commerce, and the same practice may have persisted under the Tīmūrids.<sup>49</sup> During a revolt at Yazd, rebels seized three ass-loads of silk fabrics which had been purchased for Sarāy-Mulk Khānīm and which were being stored along with two years of tax revenue in cash. These items were stolen from the residence of the local finance official after his murder. The rebel leader ordered local tailors to sew robes-of-honor from Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's cloth for his followers, which suggests that the fabric in question was the high quality silk normally used for such garments.<sup>50</sup>

Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's patronage of architecture was closely linked to that of Tīmūr himself. Fifteenth-century sources credit her with building a *madrasa* and a tomb in the northern section of Samarkand

between a city gate and the Congregational Mosque erected by Tīmūr. The best documented of these is the *madrasa*, situated across from the mosque's main portal; Tīmūr stayed there during both the mosque's initial construction period in 801/1399 and during its later reconstruction of 807/1404.<sup>51</sup> Both Faṣīḥ and Ibn 'Arabshāh state that the same group of workmen were responsible for these two structures.<sup>52</sup>

This *madrasa* has vanished, but its design and decoration were apparently linked to that of the mosque. Work on the Great Mosque began on 14 Ramādān 801/May 20 1399, just a few weeks after Tīmūr's return from India and only a few days after the arrival of his booty, which included both craftsmen and elephants.<sup>53</sup> Yazdī stresses the role of elephants in this building's construction; Indian craftsmen also seem to have been of importance, for the building's plan incorporates clear references to the building traditions of that region, such as the domed and vaulted units placed in the middle of each side.<sup>54</sup> Ibn 'Arabshāh's claim that the Samarkand mosque was intended to replicate the intricate white marble decoration of a specific Indian structure which Tīmūr particularly admired is puzzling, since surviving fourteenth century mosques from the Delhi region are decorated only with painted stucco. It is true, though, that marble revetments were used on other buildings of the period.<sup>55</sup>

The fact that the *madrasa* and mosque directly faced each other makes it probable that their placement was part of a broader plan to create an impressive new complex in Samarkand. The scheme of having two major religious buildings face each other across an open space recalls not only the plan of the *madrasa-khānaqā* complex of Muḥammad Sulṭān in Samarkand but also later examples of city planning in both Samarkand and Bukhara.<sup>56</sup> If these two structures were conceived as an ensemble, however, questions remain as to why construction on the *madrasa* preceded that of the mosque, as well as why the mosque was begun immediately after Tīmūr's return from India.

Tīmūrid historians justify both Tīmūr's decision to build a mosque and his invasion of India in religious terms. His building of a mosque is described as a means of ensuring his entry into Paradise, and his invasion of India is presented as a religious war [*ghazā*].<sup>57</sup> Erecting mosques with funds acquired through attacks on infidels served further to increase the religious merit of such a

deed, so that Tīmūr's booty from India was ideally suited to this task. It is even possible that Tīmūr's invasion of India was conceived, primarily, to amass the wealth and man-power needed to build a new mosque, rather than in order to extend his empire. Descriptions of how Samarkand's new Great Mosque was built stress the size of the undertaking and state that five hundred quarry workers and two hundred masons were employed on this project along with ninety-five elephant teams.<sup>58</sup> Yazdī states that much of the mosque was erected with alacrity, possibly in a matter of weeks.<sup>59</sup>

Given this large workforce and the rapidity with which the mosque's construction was launched after Tīmūr's return from India, it is evident that many of these persons must have already been in Tīmūrid employ, and it is probable that preliminary plans for both Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm's* *madrasa* and Tīmūr's mosque had been created before his departure for the sub-continent in the spring of 800/1398. Since the same persons were responsible for both buildings, it is possible that, during Tīmūr's absence, they began to build Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm's* *madrasa* and that, after his return from India, the crew, augmented by new specialists from that country, focused their energy on the mosque. Some alterations to the mosque's plan could have been made to reflect structural or decorative features which Tīmūr had admired during his Indian campaign.

Despite Yazdī's hyperbolic description of the speed with which the mosque was erected, it is evident from other testimony that the building was unfinished when Tīmūr left for his "Seven Year Campaign" in the fall of 1399. Work on the mosque's surrounding walls and entrance portal continued almost until Tīmūr's return to Samarkand in late summer of 807/1404. An inscription from the mosque's entrance portal carries the date of 806/July 1403–July 1404.<sup>60</sup> By all accounts, when Tīmūr saw the newly completed mosque he was displeased. According to Yazdī, Tīmūr felt the mosque's entrance was "narrow and short" and ordered that it be torn down and rebuilt on a grander scale.<sup>61</sup> Faṣīḥ ascribes Tīmūr's anger to the fact that the mosque portal's vault was less impressive than that of Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm's* *madrasa* which it faced, a slight made even more galling by the circumstance that both structures were the work of the same individuals. Tīmūr also accused the men responsible for governing Samarkand during his absence of misusing funds intended for the mosque's construction.<sup>62</sup> Ibn 'Arabshāh's

statement that the walls, colonades, and even columns of the *madrassa* were larger and more impressive than those of the mosque seems exaggerated, for Clavijo confirms that it was only the mosque portal which was demolished and rebuilt. He also provides anecdotal details about how the workmen were kept at the task night and day until the onset of wintery weather made further work impossible.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the fact that Clavijo understood Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's *madrassa* to be a 'palace,' his description of the structure itself is sufficiently detailed to link his comments with other evidence about it. He came there on several occasions in order to have an audience with Tīmūr. On his first visit, dated to September 29, 1404, he describes it as the 'palace' to which was attached the tomb of Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's mother, who had recently died. He notes that unlike the other palaces which he visited, this one had 'many separate apartments.' He admires its 'rich furnishings' but notes that the building was unfinished and that workmen were trying to complete the decoration of some rooms. He found Tīmūr playing chess with *ṣayyids* and inspecting the gifts of an envoy which were spread out before him.<sup>64</sup> Although Tīmūrid historians do not seem to have recorded this particular event, they mention that Tīmūr held audiences in Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's *madrassa* during the late summer and fall of 1404.<sup>65</sup>

Clavijo's comments about this "palace" and its attached tomb can be linked with the ruins of a mausoleum near the Great Mosque of Samarkand in which archaeologists found three female skeletons. This is considered to be the only standing portion of Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's *madrassa* complex.<sup>66</sup> In design it resembles the Gūr-i Mīr, being a two-story square structure with chamfered corners and a cross-shaped interior chamber.<sup>67</sup> Its high double dome had *muqarnas* decoration on its interior and tile panels on the exterior which are reminiscent of those on both the Gūr-i Mīr and the Great Mosque of Samarkand. Careful examination of the mausoleum has shown that it was added to a pre-existing structure, although that earlier building has vanished. The many forms of decoration used in this mausoleum suggest that it was erected at the end of Tīmūr's reign.<sup>68</sup>

Clavijo's comments about the unfinished state of Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's *madrassa* in the fall of 1404 demonstrate that its construction, like that of the nearby mosque, had extended over a number of years. The fact that Tīmūr stayed in the building as early



as the summer of 1399 need not imply that it had been completed by that date. Clavijo's description of several visits to "the palace beside the Mosque" during November 1404 reveal that Tīmūr slept in a tent pitched in the *madrassa* courtyard and conducted business while seated on a raised platform in the open air.<sup>69</sup> Clavijo's description of Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm's* *madrassa* as a 'palace' suggests that it had not yet begun to function as a center for religious education. Tīmūrid sources are silent about the fate of Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm's* *madrassa* after Tīmūr's death, but it is probable that she is one of the three women buried in its mausoleum.

Historical and archaeological evidence concerning Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm's* *madrassa* and its associated mausoleum demonstrates how intimately its history is linked not only to that of the nearby mosque built by Tīmūr but also to the mausoleum known as the 'Gūr-i Mīr.' These interconnections are also reminiscent of the story about Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm's* cloth which was in the custody of Tīmūr's tax collector in Yazd. In both cases, boundaries between the financial dealings of family members and those of the state are difficult to discern. This raises the question of whether the architectural patronage of Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm* and of other Tīmūrid women should be viewed as a personal venture, or as part of the larger corpus of imperial monuments.

The special prestige attached to Čingizid descent among the Tīmūrids is evident in the life of Sawin Beg bint Aq Sūfi, known as *Khānzāda-Begam*, who was a descendant of Juči through her mother, *Shakar Beg bint Jānī Beg*, and was married in turn to Tīmūr's sons *Jahāngīr* and *Mīrānshāh*. Tīmūrid historians provide a detailed description of the negotiations and celebrations which marked her marriage to *Jahāngīr b. Tīmūr* in the spring of 775/1374. In addition to her beauty and intelligence, *Khānzāda* was valued for her lineage, which was expected to bolster *Jahāngīr's* claim to sovereignty. The initial negotiations began in the fall of 774/1372 and the wedding occurred in the spring of 775/1374.<sup>70</sup> *Yazdī* and *Shāmī* stress the richness of her dowry, which included golden furniture, caskets of jewels, luxurious fabrics, and various kinds of tents carried by "a hundred caravans." Not to be outdone, Tīmūr ordered a lavish reception for the bride. A delegation of family members, *amīrs*, and religious dignitaries met her and escorted her into Tīmūr's capital. Although the main festivities took place in an encampment,

Samarkand itself was decorated and the townspeople joined in the celebrations with musical performances and feasting.<sup>71</sup>

Khānzāda's marriage to Jahāngīr lasted less than two years, for he died in the spring of 777/1376 at the age of twenty, leaving behind an infant son, Muḥammad Sulṭān. Following the usual Timūrid custom, this child was taken from Khānzāda and entrusted to Timūr's elder sister Qutlugh Tarkhan Agha.<sup>72</sup> Timūr's partiality to Jahāngīr's descendants is reflected in the choice of Muḥammad Sulṭān as his heir, a scheme thwarted by the latter's early death in 805/1403.<sup>73</sup>

Khānzāda's marriage to Mīrānshāh b. Timūr proved to be more enduring, if turbulent. Two of their children achieved prominence: Khalīl Sulṭān (786–814/1384–1411), who assumed power after Timūr's death, and Bikīsī Sulṭān, who was Timūr's favorite granddaughter; both were reared at Timūr's court.<sup>74</sup> Khānzāda's presentation of the two-month old Khalīl Sulṭān to Sarāy Mulk Khānīm in the spring of 876/1384 was marked by feasting and the exchange of gifts.<sup>75</sup> Khānzāda herself seems to have been a frequent resident at Timūr's court whether in Samarkand or at an encampment. She organized banquets and distributed robes of honor on the occasion of marriages or victory celebrations.<sup>76</sup>

Mīrānshāh's installation as the ruler of western Iran in 798/1396 did not hinder Khānzāda from participating in activities at Timūr's court. During the fall of 799–800/1397, she traveled from Tabriz to Samarkand to attend the wedding of her daughter, Bikīsī Sulṭān b. Mīrānshāh, with Iskandar b. 'Umar Shaykh b. Timūr and that of Timūr with Tūkal Khānīm bint Khidr Khoja Oghlan.<sup>77</sup> About a year later, in 801/1399, Mīrānshāh and Khānzāda became estranged and she fled to Samarkand, where she awaited Timūr's return from India. The immediate cause of this rupture appears to have been her anger at his allegations of immoral conduct, but she also reported to Timūr that Mīrānshāh was flouting Timūr's orders, neglecting his duties, and devoting himself to personal pleasures.<sup>78</sup> Khānzāda's denunciation of Mīrānshāh led Timūr to conduct an inquiry into his son's actions during the fall of 802/1399 which resulted in the latter's removal from office and the execution of several of his courtiers.<sup>79</sup>

After these events, Khānzāda seems to have lived apart from her husband. She spent the next few years at Timūr's court, which was

often encamped at Sultāniya. It was there in 804/1402 that Shāh Rukh's wife, Gawhar Shād, gave birth to a boy, Muḥammad Juki, who was entrusted to Khānzāda's care.<sup>80</sup> She also traveled with Tīmūr's wives to meet him on his return from Anatolia in the summer of 805/1403, unaware that he was also escorting the body of her son Muḥammad Sultān, who had died some weeks before in Anatolia. Yazdī provides an eloquent description of her intense grief over this loss and of the mourning rituals observed by the Tīmūrids.<sup>81</sup> A year later, in 806/1404, Khānzāda was given permission to accompany Muḥammad Sultān's body to Samarkand and to arrange for his burial.<sup>82</sup>

For the next several years Khānzāda lived principally in Samarkand. She participated in the extensive celebrations held there in the fall of 807/1404 to mark the weddings of several family members, including that of Ijil b. Mīrānshāh. Clavijo attended a feast held in her compound within the Tīmūrid encampment at Kan-i Gil on October 9, 1404. He noted that she was "some forty years of age," "fair of complexion and fat."<sup>83</sup> She remained in Samarkand during Tīmūr's abortive campaign to China and was among the mourners participating in his funeral services held in the Gūr-i Mīr in the spring of 807/1405.<sup>84</sup>

Khānzāda appears to have lived quietly after Tīmūr's death, and to have become increasingly pious in her last years. Accounts of her pilgrimage to Mecca demonstrate the continued affection and respect with which she was regarded within the Tīmūrid family. In the spring of 809/1406 she left Samarkand with her young charge, Muḥammad Juki b. Shāh Rukh, and joined Shāh Rukh's court at their encampment in Bādghīs. After some days of feasting and celebration she resumed her journey passing through Herat, Yazd, and Shiraz.<sup>85</sup> As her party neared Yazd, Iskandar Sultān b. 'Umar Shaykh, who was married to her daughter Bikīsī Sultān bint Mīrānshāh, broke off his siege of Kirman and hurried back to Yazd to welcome her. When his brother, Pīr Muḥammad, learned that Khānzāda was coming to Shiraz, he abandoned his attempt to seize Isfahan and returned home in order to gather supplies needed for her pilgrimage.<sup>86</sup> Following her return from Arabia, she appears to have settled in Mashhad, where she died in Rajab 814/November 1411, only a few days after the death of her son, Khalīl Sultān b. Mīrānshāh, and was buried near the shrine of Imām Riḍā.<sup>87</sup>

Khānzāda is said to have sponsored the construction of a *khānaqā* in Herat, but its date is unknown.<sup>88</sup>

Literary sources also provide indications about Tīmūr's own attitude toward the women in his family. The strong bonds of affection he felt for his female relations are demonstrated both in his generosity towards them and in his intense mourning on the occasion of their deaths. There are also hints that Tīmūr believed in a kind of female "charisma."<sup>89</sup> One indication of such an attitude is his decision to build tombs over the graves of two of the Prophet's wives, which Tīmūr visited while in Damascus.<sup>90</sup> Tīmūr castigated the Damascenes for squandering their resources on lavishly decorated residences while failing to provide adequate shelter for the remains of the Prophet's wives. An accelerated building program undertaken during a lull in his Syrian campaign provided each grave with a domed tomb of white stone.<sup>91</sup> There is no indication that Tīmūr felt moved similarly to protect the tomb of the Prophet's muezzin, Bilāl, which he also visited in Damascus.

Tīmūrid *güregen* is usually categorized simply as a method of political legitimization, but the custom has further ramifications. The Mongol practice of having a bridegroom take up temporary residence with his wife's family has been viewed as the vestige of a matrilineal lineage system. Čingiz Khān's own marriage to Börte began in this way.<sup>92</sup> The practice of uniting sons-in-law with the bride's family could also serve to strengthen that family by integrating potential rivals within its hierarchy.

Although the term *güregen* is not used in sources to describe men who married Tīmūrid women, other aspects of this custom do seem to have been current among the Tīmūrids. The practice of having a bridegroom live with the bride's family is documented for the marriage of Tīmūr's niece Sevinj Qutluğ Agha bint Shīrīn Beg Agha to the son of the Kart ruler of Herat, Pīr Muḥammad b. Ghiyāth al-Dīn. The groom resided in Samarkand for a period before taking his bride to Herat where the marriage was celebrated with great pomp.<sup>93</sup> Men related to Tīmūr through marriage with his sisters or daughters appear to have had an honored position within the family at large. Members of the Dūghlāt tribe who were traditionally *güregens* to the descendants of Čaghatāy b. Čingiz also married Tīmūrid women. One of them, Sulaymānshāh b. Da'ūd

Dūghlāt, was simultaneously Tīmūr's nephew and son-in-law and held high positions under both Tīmūr and Shāh Rukh.<sup>94</sup>

The prominence of women within the Tīmūrid family was further enhanced by the adoption of a genealogy which linked Tīmūr both to the Čingizids and to a common female ancestor, Alan Kuwa, who was believed to have conceived three sons after being miraculously impregnated by a ray of light. This story, which appears in the oldest known Mongol chronicle, *The Secret History*, is repeated by Yazdī in his discussion of Tīmūr's ancestry. Yazdī draws a parallel between this story and accounts of the miraculous impregnation of the Virgin Mary.<sup>95</sup>

A visual record of Tīmūrid descent from Alan Kuwa is provided by a genealogical scroll, now in the Topkapı Sarāyi Museum, which was probably prepared for Tīmūr's grandson Khālil Sulṭān b. Mīrānshāh, who seized power after his grandfather's death in 1405. His descent from Čingiz Khān is traced through two women, his mother, Khānzāda, and his grandmother, Shakar Beg bint Jānī Beg.<sup>96</sup>

This stress on Khānzāda's matrilineal descent is also echoed in other Tīmūrid sources. Tīmūr's biographer, Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī, identifies her as "Khānzāda bint Shakar Beg Khānīm," in conjunction with a feast which she sponsored at the Tīmūrid encampment in 795/1392–93.<sup>97</sup> During his visit to the Tīmūrid court in 1404, Clavijo heard an explanation of her prestige within the Tīmūrid family which suggests that during Tīmūr's lifetime she was viewed as a link to their own mythic past. He understood Khānzāda to be "descended from a prince who was the forefather of Tīmūr, and for this reason enjoys great respect at the hands of her father-in-law."<sup>98</sup>

Information about Tīmūrid women contained in historical sources can also be supplemented by a few paintings from manuscripts or albums. Ibn 'Arabshāh's claim that Tīmūr's palaces contained wall paintings where his wives and concubines were depicted is plausible, but no such paintings have survived.<sup>99</sup> There are, however, a few scattered instances where female members of the Tīmūrid dynasty are depicted. One of them, now in the Freer Gallery, Washington, D.C., shows Tīmūr's grandson Ulūgh Beg holding a formal audience with his courtiers and wives; it offers a visual parallel to textual descriptions of Tīmūrid audience scenes

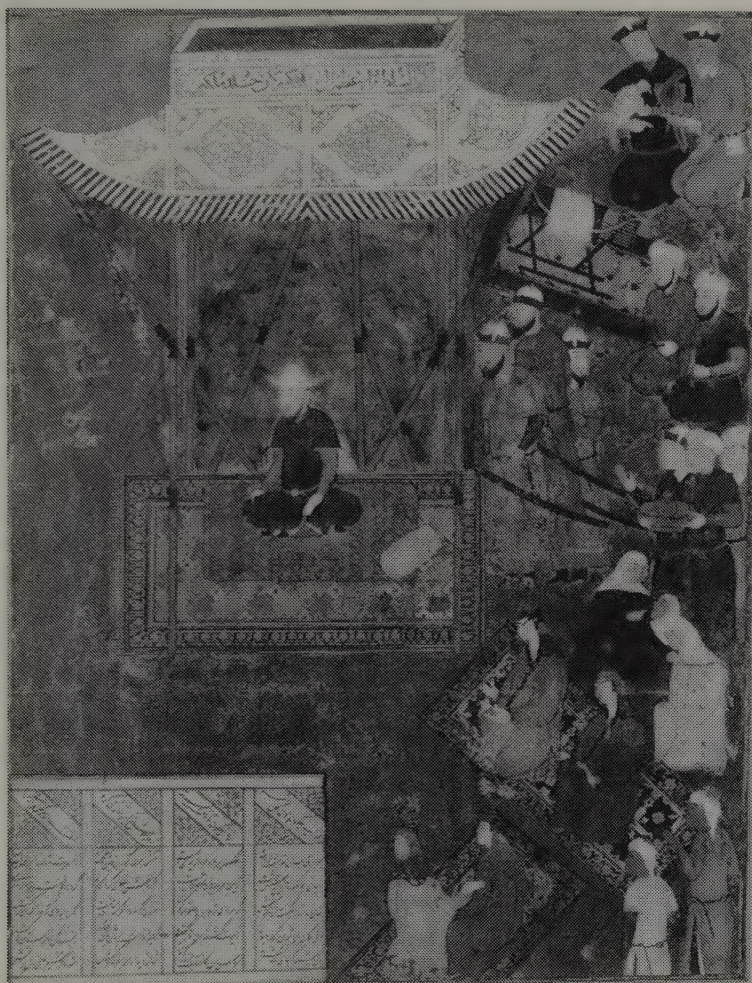


Figure 1. *Ulugh Beg ibn Shābrūkh holds an audience.* Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C.), Freer Gallery of Art, no. 46.26.



Figure 2. Mongol ruler and his court. Courtesy of Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, Hazine 2153, fol. 166a.



Figure 3. Mongol ruler and his court. Courtesy of Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, Hazine 2153, fol. 23b.



(fig. 1). Ulūgh Beg himself is seated in solitary splendor on a carpet under a canopy bearing his titles. His personal attendants and court officials are clustered in the upper left corner. Four women wearing the traditional jeweled and feather-ornamented headdress of Mongol women are seated on two carpets in the lower right-hand corner. They must be among Ulūgh Beg's fourteen wives and concubines listed in sources, but a more precise identification is impossible.<sup>100</sup> This painting's scheme of a ruler with his wives and concubines seated in rank order at his side recalls Tīmūr's audiences which Clavijo attended at Samarkand.<sup>101</sup> This painting is half of a double page composition.

This depiction of Ulūgh Beg's audience belongs to a well-established tradition of enthronement paintings which follow an Ilkhānid Mongol precedent. The most complete rendition of this theme is found in double-paged portraits of various descendants of Čingiz Khān surrounded by their families and court officials known from both manuscripts and album paintings (figs. 2–3). These Mongol paintings provide a glimpse of the ordered hierarchy which pertained at such events. The ruler is seated on an elevated throne with his principal wife to his left; his other wives and concubines are shown seated in small groups to the left of the throne. His principal officials are arranged in groups to his right.<sup>102</sup>

The Tīmūrid and Mongol paintings are similar in their depiction of a ruler flanked by family members and courtiers, but differ in important details. In the Ulūgh Beg painting, men and women are both placed to the ruler's left and he sits alone, but this page is also incomplete; it has clearly been cut down and appears to be the right-half of a two-page composition. B.W. Robinson has suggested that its missing left-half is a painting now in the Keir collection and that both pages were made for a now lost manuscript.<sup>103</sup> The Keir painting may depict the arrival of an envoy at Ulūgh Beg's court as two men wearing distinctive hats stand on a carpet facing Ulūgh Beg and several others carry objects which may be gifts.

Events involving women described in historical sources are also occasionally depicted in manuscript illustrations. A copy of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's *Zafar-nāma*, dated to Dhu'l-Hijja 839/June–July 1436, depicts events from the lives of both Sarāy Mulk Khānīm and Khānzāda Begam.<sup>104</sup> Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's role as "foster-mother" to Tīmūr's sons and grandsons is epitomized in a painting from this manuscript, now in the Seattle Art Museum, which illustrates her

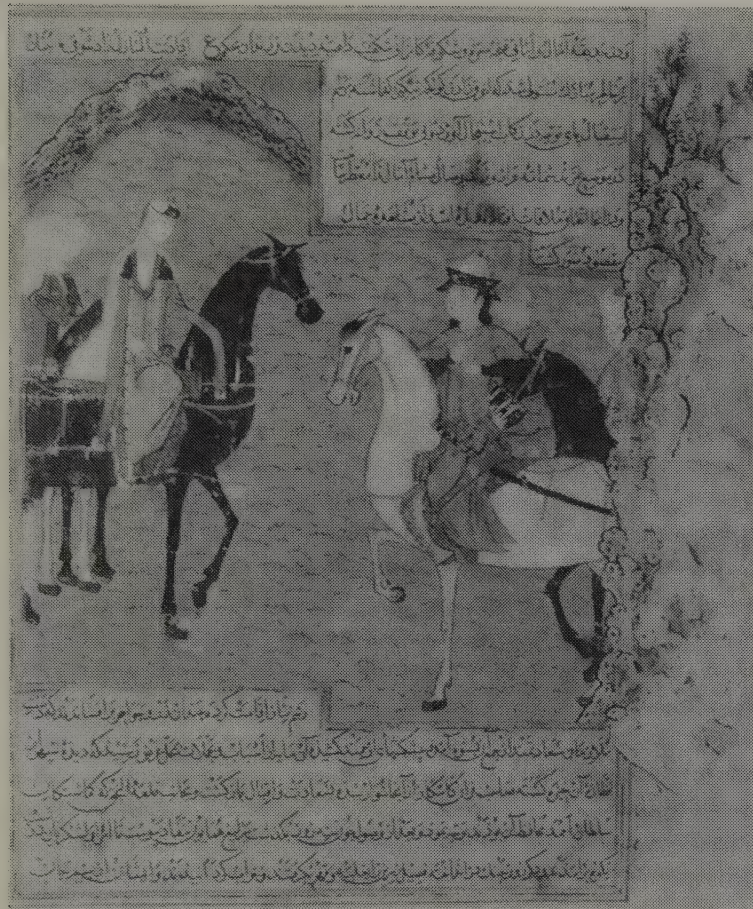


Figure 4. Sarāy Mulk *Khānīm* and *Ulūgh Beg*. Courtesy of Seattle Art Museum, no. 49.133.

journey with Shāh Rukh b. Tīmūr and Khalīl Sulṭān b. Mīrānshāh from Samarkand to Tīmūr's encampment in northwestern Iran (fig. 4). According to its location in the text, this painting should illustrate the moment when Sarāy Mulk Khānīm's party meets a group of horsemen sent from Tīmūr's encampment to welcome them, but it actually seems to depict the journey itself.<sup>105</sup> Mounted women on the left must be Sarāy Mulk Khānīm and her attendants, whereas the male figures on the right are probably Shāh Rukh, then ten years of age, and an attendant. Three-year old Khalīl Sulṭān is not depicted.

Two important events from Khānzāda's life are illustrated in this same manuscript: her marriage to Jahāngīr b. Tīmūr and the mourning for her son Muḥammad Sulṭān; however, neither includes her depiction. The wedding scene is represented very summarily by an enthroned figure seated in front of a tent and flanked by male attendants. It does not seem to correspond to a particular event, but rather to show a ruler with his attendants. The painter probably lacked any experience in representing a wedding celebration and used instead one of the stock images from his repertoire.<sup>106</sup> The scene of mourning for Muḥammad Sulṭān, spread over two pages, shows various members of the Tīmūrid court clustered around the prince's coffin. The left-hand page shows Tīmūr, and three ladies of the court expressing their anguish by tearing their hair whereas the right-hand page shows grief-stricken men weeping and rending their garments.<sup>107</sup> This painting bears a closer resemblance to textual descriptions of this event than did the wedding scene, although some rituals are omitted such as the blackening of faces. This painting belongs to a tradition of funerary imagery developed in the Mongol period.<sup>108</sup>

The lives of the three Tīmūrid women surveyed here, Qutluḡ Tarkhān Agha, Sarāy Mulk Khānīm, and Khānzāda Begam provide an indication of the varied roles which women played within the Tīmūrid dynasty. The distinctive familial structure to which they belonged had strong ties to the Turko-Mongol past, and this heritage was transmitted to Tīmūr's numerous descendants. However, in their patronage of Islamic religious institutions and their sponsorship of architecture, Tīmūrid women represent a break with this past. Their personal wealth may be difficult to differentiate from that of their male relatives, but their more tranquil and sedentary lives helped

them to gain prominence as patrons of architecture which, too, was a model for later generations. Although the direct visual record of their lives may be meager, varied texts of the period provide glimpses of their personalities and accomplishments.

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68. Golombek and Wilber, *Architecture*, vol. 1, pp. 254–55, vol. 2, pls. 63–65.

69. Clavijo, *Embassy*, pp. 280–81.

70. Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, vol. 1, p. 67; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. ‘Abbāsī, vol. 1, p. 180.

71. Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, vol. 1, p. 68; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. ‘Abbāsī, vol. 1, pp. 182–86; Faṣīhī, *Mujmal*, vol. 3, p. 106.

72. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. ‘Abbāsī, vol. 1, pp. 200–01; Faṣīhī, *Mujmal*, vol. 3, p. 110; Woods, *Timūrid Dynasty*, p. 29.

73. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. ‘Abbāsī, vol. 2, pp. 152–53, 273–75, 304, 350–56.

74. *Khalīl Sulṭān*: Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, vol. 1, p. 95; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. ‘Abbāsī, vol. 1, pp. 278, 301, 414; *Bikīsī Sulṭān*: Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, vol. 1, p. 169, vol. 2, p. 136; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. ‘Abbāsī, vol. 1, pp. 414, 517; vol. 2, pp. 140, 270, 420, 449.

75. Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, vol. 1, p. 95; vol. 2, p. 54; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 1, p. 278.
76. Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, vol. 1, pp. 136, 138; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 1, pp. 351, 408, 444, 540, 580; Clavijo, *Embassy*, p. 244.
77. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 1, p. 580, vol. 2, p. 13.
78. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 2, pp. 150–51; *Khwāndamīr, Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 481–82; Clavijo, *Embassy*, p. 164; Woods, "Turco-Iranica II," pp. 332–35.
79. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 2, pp. 155–57.
80. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 2, p. 275; Faṣīḥī, *Mujmal*, 3 p. 145.
81. Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, vol. 1, pp. 329–30; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 2, pp. 360–64.
82. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 2, pp. 399–400.
83. Clavijo, *Embassy*, pp. 244–47.
84. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 2, p. 500.
85. Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Zubdat*, vol. 1, pp. 152–53; Faṣīḥī, *Mujmal*, vol. 3, p. 173.
86. Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Zubdat*, vol. 1, pp. 177–78.
87. Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Zubdat*, vol. 1, pp. 436, 439; *Khwāndamīr, Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 587.
88. Bernard O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture in Khurasan* (Costa Mesa, Ca.: Mazda Publishers with Undena Publications, 1987), p. 82.
89. See above notes 14 and 15.
90. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 2, p. 238.
91. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 2, pp. 242–43.
92. Vladimirtsov, *Régime social*, p. 59; I. de Rachewiltz, "The Secret History of the Mongols," in *Papers on Far Eastern History* 4 (Canberra: Department of Far Eastern History, The Australian National University Sept. 1971): 129–31.
93. [Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū] *Cinq Opuscles de Hafiz-i Abru*, ed. F. Tauer (Prague: L'Académie Tchecoslovaque des Sciences, 1959), pp. 58–59.
94. S. Ando, *Timūridische Emire nach dem Mu'izz al-anṣāb* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1992), pp. 67, 80–81, 108–09, 121, 168; Beatrice F. Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 46, 74, 78, 121–22, 140; Clavijo, *Embassy*, pp. 167–70, 306.
95. F.W. Cleaves, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. 1, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 1–4; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. Urunbaev, p. 64.
96. Osman F. Sertkaya, "Timūrlu Şeceresi (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi 2152, v, 32–43)," in *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* (Istanbul Sanat Tarihi Enstitüsü) vols. 9–10 (1970–80), pp. 241–59, esp. p. 251.
97. Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, vol. 1, p. 138.



98. Clavijo, *Embassy*, pp. 247–48.
99. Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, p. 465; Ibn 'Arabshāh, *Zindigī*, p. 465.
100. B.W. Robinson, *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting: Problems and Issues* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), p. 49, fig. 15, Woods, *Timūrid Dynasty*, pp. 43–44.
101. Clavijo *Embassy*, pp. 258–61.
102. Beyhan Karamağaralı, "Camiu't-Tevarih'in Bilinmeyen bir Nüshasına ait Dört Minyatür," in *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, (İstanbul: Sanat Tarihi Enstitüsü, 1966–68), vol. 1, pp. 70–86, figs. 1–7.
103. Robinson, *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting*, p. 15; B.W. Robinson, "Persian and Pre-Mughal Indian Painting," in *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book*, ed. B.W. Robinson (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), p. 150, pl. 10.
104. Eleanor Sims, "Ibrahim-Sultan's Illustrated *Zafar-nameh* of 839/1436," in *Islamic Art 4* (New York: Bruschetti Foundation, Genoa and Islamic Art Foundation, 1990–91): 175–218.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 198, fig. 6; Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī, vol. 1, p. 301: line 18.
106. Sims, "Ibrahim-Sultan's Illustrated *Zafar-nameh*," 197, fig 3.
107. Sims, "Ibrahim-Sultan's Illustrated *Zafar-nameh*," 207–08, figs. 27–28.
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## CONJUGAL RIGHTS VERSUS CLASS

### PREROGATIVES:

## A DIVORCE CASE IN MAMLÛK CAIRO

*Carl F. Petry*

*Analysis of a divorce case that occurred in Cairo during 1470 and sheds light on: the social status of women in medieval Egypt and the interpretation of their conjugal rights in court.*

Early in the reign of the famous Mamlûk sulţān al-Ashraf Qāyţbāy (H 872–901/CE 1468–96), the chronicler Nûr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Dā’ūd al-Jawharī al-Şayrafi<sup>1</sup> commented at some length on a divorce case, the details of which are intriguing because of their relevance to the social status of women in medieval Egypt, the interpretation of their conjugal rights in court, the enforcement of principles idealized in Islamic Law [*sharī‘a*], and the process of negotiation leading to a practical resolution of conflicting claims. The case provides a rare glimpse into concrete circumstances surrounding the pursuit of litigation by a woman who, despite her elevated class background, had fallen into penury because of the abuse inflicted on her by a husband who callously ignored her conjugal rights. Not only does the case depict litigation proceedings in a complaint raised by a woman. It sheds light on: her capacity to file a suit in court without the mediation of either her parents or a male agent (*wakīl*); the perspectives of those litigants charged with violation of her rights; and the attitudes of magistrates and officers charged with investigating her claim and deciding the appropriate chastisement of the guilty parties. Since civil cases of this kind appear infrequently in the narrative sources of the Egyptian Mamlûk period (647–923/1250–1517), focusing as they do on the behavior, finances, and rivalries of the ruling military elite, the incident significantly enhances our understanding of gender relations in a pre-modern Muslim society as they were played out in its legal system.

The individual who described this incident was a participant in it. Al-Şayrafī regarded himself first and foremost as a Ḥanāfī jurist who pursued his historical writing as an avocation he could indulge due to his lengthy periods of inactivity. Al-Şayrafī's modest background fired his ambition to strive for a higher station than his father had attained as a moneychanger. Yet for all his efforts to gain acceptance within the highest magisterial ranks, al-Şayrafī was fated to remain at the medial level of a deputy judge [*nā'ib qādī*], subordinate to the decisions of the chief Ḥanāfī Justice of Cairo. Although the episode under consideration in this study provides an indication of al-Şayrafī's judicial service, he in fact seems to have spent much of his time in court observing the deliberations of his superiors. He had ample opportunity to fill a journal with copious notes about the proceedings of the sultān's appeals court [*mazālim*], over which the autocrat's senior adjutants frequently presided. Al-Şayrafī's second chronicle, *Inbā' al-Ḥaṣr*, despite the fragmentary state of its preservation, offers the kind of close-range depiction of the judicial process in the Mamlūk appellate tribunal that a jurist who hovered at the margins of influential court factions could write. Here, my translation of the Arabic text of the episode is followed by an analysis of issues it raises. The terseness of al-Şayrafī's style has required the frequent inclusion of terms omitted completely or implied solely by pronouns. These are indicated by brackets.

THE TEXT, FROM *INBĀ' AL-ḤAṢR BI-ABNĀ' AL-'AṢR*: P. 226, LINE 15:

On Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> [of Jumādā 1 875/22 November 1470], his secretary [*kātibuhu* = al-Şayrafī] was summoned to the residence of the World's Eminence, the illustrious, the revered al-Sayfī Yaşbak min Maḥdī, the Grand Major-Domo [*al-Dawādār al-Kabīr*, literally 'inkstand bearer'], may his felicity endure. The reason for this summons: A young woman had filed a suit with the chief *qādī*, Muḥibb al-Dīn ibn al-Şihna al-Ḥanāfī, the substance of which after the *bismilla* [In the name of God] [was as follows]: 'The Mamlūka, relative of so-and-so [feminine], the youthful virgin, bowed low [kissed the ground] stating that she was poverty-stricken and weary of begging. Her parents had been absent for a period exceeding three years from Cairo and its environs. Her petition [was for] a noble permission from one of the respected deputy magistrates [*nuwwāb*] to marry her off [p. 227] to one who was prepared to offer for her marriage a dower equivalent and appropriate, this judgment as a charity to her,'—to its end. On her behalf [in response to the

petition], the *Qāḍī* Nūr al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, may God the All-High augment him, wrote [the following response]: 'It [the petition/suit] shall be looked into from the legal point of view, considering the appropriateness of the match.'

His secretary [al-Ṣayrafī] investigated thoroughly the legal conditions [pertaining to the petition]. He obtained testimony that her mother and father were indeed absent for the legally prescribed period from Cairo and its environs. He [then] recommended three individuals as suitable for her, one of whom was a *khaṣṣakī*. The [initial] contract had been drawn up; she [the girl] had been deflowered—as a child of twelve years—despite her homely appearance. I had not allowed him [the betrothed spouse] to have intercourse with her. [But] it so happened that he divorced her, before the witness of [others] than us after consummation and intercourse.

Her [the girl's] maternal aunt had requested of him [the spouse] [agreement to] all her rights [of divorce], having written to him [the spouse] a [legal] deposition on her behalf in the amount of seven *dīnārs*—on the condition that he divorce her. The spouse was a bondsman [*ghulām*] to one of the military class [*jund*] named Fāris, who belonged to the Sulṭānī Mamlūks. His origin was a Sayfī Mamlūk. The girl's aunt had proceeded to her [place of] residence in Bulaq and informed them [her neighbors] about her predicament, [to wit]: How he [the *ghulām* spouse] had married her [the girl], violated her virginity and then divorced her after having [himself] written a deposition against her and complained of her to the magistrates [*nuqabā'*], and fined her one *dīnār*.

Thereupon, the people of Bulaq gathered, raised the young girl aloft and conveyed her to the residence of the World's Eminence the Grand Major-Domo. He ordered two couriers and two agents to summon the *ghulām* and his patron [*ustādhahu*]. They presented themselves after a short time. When the husband stood before the Dawādār, the latter said to him: 'Have you behaved in this fashion?' [Have you done this and that?] He [the *ghulām*] muttered [in the affirmative], whereupon he [the Dawādār] purposed to flog him. But his [the *ghulām*'s] patron, the *jundī*, then stood up and raised his voice, saying: 'For what offense is my bondsman to be flogged? He did nothing except what the *qāḍī* and the witnesses [agreed]!' He [the Dawādār] then said: 'Summon the *qāḍī*!' [al-Ṣayrafī] When the matter reached my ears, I rode forth. Upon my arrival at the gate of the Grand Major-Domo, I found that no request was directed at me to enter. [Nonetheless,] I did so and stood before him [the Dawādār], [whereupon] he said to me: 'Oh *Qāḍī*, did you wed this [woman] to that [man]?' I replied: 'Yes.' He said: 'Why?' I replied: 'My assistant [*mustanībī*] gave permission to him for that by a comprehensive

deposition in his own hand.' He replied to me: 'Is such a woman to be married off?' He then pointed out that she was [still] a minor. I said to him: 'My legal view [allows] that, because the Prophet, may the blessings and peace of God be upon him, married 'Ā'ishā, mother of the believers, may God be pleased with her, when she was [but] a child of nine years.' He replied: [p. 228] 'Do you equate this woman with this ['Ā'ishā] or that man with that [the Prophet?]' I replied: 'No, my Lord, for the Prophet, may the blessings and peace of God be upon him, is a Lawgiver, and we are [of] his community and adherents of his example [*sunna*]' He fell silent, ceasing to speak with me. Then, he turned to the magistrates and officers attending his council, and said to them: 'The *qāḍī* [al-Ṣayrafī] has confronted me with this response. I have no dispute with him, nor indeed with anyone else save for the Mamlūk and his *ghulām*.' Then, the *Shaykh* *Shams al-Dīn al-Amshārī al-Ḥanāfī* stood up and addressed me: 'Did you have conclusive proof of [their] absence?' I replied: 'Yes' He said: 'Who are they [those giving testimony?]' I replied: 'Those aforementioned in her marriage contract.' He said: 'Produce them!' He [al-Amshārī] then asked the *jundī* to do that.

The Grand Dawādār, may God protect him, then spoke harshly to him [the *jundī*], and ordered him to produce them. If he did not, he [the Dawādār] would flog him with a thousand strokes. They [the *jundī* and *ghulām*] thus went forth to do so. We adjourned until Monday the second of Jumādā 2 [26 November]. He [the Dawādār] summoned me also, after he received the testimony and the vouchers/recommenders. He then ordered me to depart. He had the *ghulām* flogged one hundred lashes with the bastinado, being inclined toward inflicting two hundred. He [the Dawādār] then ordered that he [the *ghulām*] be put on display in the town [as a warning] to those who deflowered girls—he and his patron—and for taking from them what he was not entitled.

It had been earlier related to the aforementioned Grand Dawādār, may God augment Islam with him, that he [the *ghulām*] had overpowered the girl, along with his patron. They had persisted in doing to her what was not permissible, and she had fled from the two of them. Her aunt had been angered, and [therefore] he [the *ghulām*] had written a deposition against the girl unjustly.

He [the Dawādār] then summoned the Mamlūk and ordered him stripped of his tunic. Those present at the council of the esteemed and revered Dawādār interceded for him [the Mamlūk]. He [the Dawādār] then ordered that the girl be placed on his [the Mamlūk's] back, and that he be publicly denounced [for his crime]. They [those in attendance] pleaded clemency for him. He [the Dawādār] then ordered them [the *ghulām* and patron] to proceed to the house of

the Ḥanāfi *qāḍī* [Ibn al-Shiḥna], where they negotiated with him as to his [the *ghulām*'s] obligations concerning the girl. He [the *qāḍī*] ruled the two clear, after the *ghulām* paid her [the girl] four *dīnārs*. A protest on her behalf was raised throughout the town.

In fact, what the Grand Major-Domo, may God preserve him, did to this *ghulām* and his patron issued from the right person in the right place. For this *jundī* [the Mamlūk] dwelled in the quarter of Bahā' al-Dīn Qarāqūsh, in the house of our Shaykh, Shaykh al-Islām Ibn [p. 229] Ḥajar, may God have mercy on him. He despoiled it [the quarter], he and this *ghulām*, due to the frequency of [their] spoliation of markets and sellers. They appropriated straw, clover/fodder, chickens and other commodities. Anything that passed by them they snatched. If they paid any price [at all], they gave out a quarter of [the commodity's] value. The people of this district thus rejoiced in his [the *ghulām*'s] fate; and his status was diminished. May God be praised for that, for he is the Guardian and the Master. I had assumed that this *ghulām* had perished from the flogging. But upon my rising in the morning, I beheld him walking like any healthy person, complaining of nothing. I was astonished at that. He spoke truly who said: 'Indeed, in both night and day miracles occur!' Praise be to God!, then Praise be to God!, then [again] Praise be to God!

#### THE PLAINTIFF'S STATUS

The plaintiff was referred to as a 'Mamlūka' or female member of the military elite that dominated Cairene society throughout the later Middle Ages. The feminine usage of this term occurs very rarely in the contemporary chronicles, since most women who belonged to this class were usually designated 'ladies' [*sittāt*] or 'princesses' [*khawandāt*]. The author's use of the term implied the plaintiff's assertion of her claim to the heightened status devolving upon a legal category of persons, with the presumption of privileges appertaining to it. The plaintiff claimed a state of poverty which presumably was inconsistent with her legal station in society. She was filing a petition with the appellate authorities to arrange a match with a prospective husband who would offer her a dower [*mahr*] 'equivalent' [*mithil*] to her legal station and 'appropriate' [*kafā'a*] in the aftermath of an unjust divorce which a disparaging husband had used as an excuse to abandon her. The absence of the girl's parents from Cairo was not elaborated beyond the magistrate's certification of the length of time acknowledged by the court as qualifying her for legal abandonment.

Once the plaintiff's destitution and dereliction were confirmed by the deputy judge assigned to investigate the case (al-Şayrafi), she was permitted, under court sponsorship, to petition for a suitor of means sufficient to restore her to an income appropriate for her rank in society. The deputy judge recommended three individuals capable of providing for the plaintiff properly, all presumably chosen from the Mamlūk elite themselves. One was described as a *khaṣṣakī*, or member of the sulṭān's personal bodyguard—an elite corps of Mamlūk recruits selected for special favors of stipends and land allotments [*iqṭāʿs*] conferred on them by the autocrat to ensure their loyalty. Since the plaintiff's claim of poverty was corroborated by al-Şayrafi's inquiry, she apparently had nothing but her formal status to offer a suitor. The readiness of the legal authorities to endorse her petition therefore suggested their acknowledgment of her destitution as a condition untenable under the customary laws adhered to in the appeals court that decided most litigation affecting the Mamlūk elite.<sup>2</sup>

Although Ḥanāfi magistrates examined the petition, presumably to verify conditions of abandonment and destitution imposed unjustly upon a minor, the *sharīʿa* does not seem to have dealt directly with the plaintiff's dilemma.<sup>3</sup> Ultimate jurisdiction over the case was accordingly assumed by the sulṭān's most powerful officer, the Grand Major-Domo Yaşbak min Maḥdī, who often convened sessions of the *mazālim* court and was empowered to enforce the findings of magistrates investigating cases that involved members of the Mamlūk caste. The hearing of this case by the second-ranked military official of the Mamlūk state implied reliance on customary law in a suit deriving from infringement of class privilege, given the absence of specific provisions for its resolution under *sharīʿa*.

#### VIOLATION OF THE PLAINTIFF'S CONJUGAL RIGHTS

The plaintiff had been betrothed to a bondsman [*ghulam*]<sup>4</sup> in service to a Mamlūk officer while she was below the legal age of consummation. She had attained twelve years when she filed her suit before the Dawādār and was apparently within her rights to refuse the act of intercourse. Her betrothed spouse nonetheless forced himself upon her and terminated her virginity. Although al-Şayrafi emphatically depicted the girl's deflowering as an injustice, he did not infer that she would bear it indefinitely as a stigma. Following

the girl's divorce from the *ghulām*, al-Ṣayrafī could recommend suitors for her with confidence that she was socially acceptable as a bride.

The Major-Domo himself had questioned the legality of the girl's initial betrothal while still a minor, to which al-Ṣayrafī responded with a precedent sanctioned by the Ḥanāfī school [*madhhab*]. Arguing that the Prophet had wed his fourth wife 'Ā'ishā when she was even younger than the plaintiff, al-Ṣayrafī defended his issuance of a contract for the plaintiff's first marriage. He had done so, however, on the assumption that the girl's betrothed spouse would abstain from intercourse until she had reached the age of consummation (unspecified in this case, but presumably after attainment of puberty).<sup>5</sup> The magistrate, and subsequently the Major-Domo, would condemn the *ghulām*'s forced abuse of the girl's right to virginity while a minor, and his later abandonment of her after filing a deposition that falsified the original terms of their betrothal.

The reader must reconstruct these conditions logically from the rather fragmentary statements al-Ṣayrafī provided. Yet it is clear that no one examining the girl's petition regarded her deflowerment as an impediment barring her from a remarriage that carried with it a dower appropriate to her station. Not only was she free of fault, but she had been legally betrothed and a contract had been signed under the supervision of a Ḥanāfī judge.

THE DEPOSITION FILED BY THE PLAINTIFF'S MATERNAL AUNT ('*KHALA*') Al-Ṣayrafī's laconic treatment of this interesting aspect of the case in his text impairs a precise understanding of its context. But the chronicler mentioned the girl's maternal aunt as the only relative who was prepared to accept legal responsibility for her. Al-Ṣayrafī offered no details elucidating their familial ties. Nonetheless, the plaintiff's aunt was ready to write a deposition (in effect, a *maṣṭūra* or promissory note) in the amount of seven *dīnārs* in exchange for the *ghulām*'s agreement to a divorce settlement that presumably assured preservation of the girl's virginity. This figure in gold currency was not an insubstantial sum in an environment of rampant inflation that had reduced the value of a debased *dirham* [copper and silver coin] to approximately one three-hundredth of an *Ashrafī dīnār*.<sup>6</sup>



Yet the aunt's offer of this promissory note to the *ghulām* was described as unlawful, with no further explanation for its illicitness. Its proferment seems indeed to have complicated resolution of the case when the girl appealed it before the Major-Domo. Al-Ṣayrafī himself raised no objections to the aunt's initiative in assuming responsibility for defense of her niece's claims. Neither the aunt's gender nor her lack of a paternal blood tie to the plaintiff seem to have constituted grounds for disqualifying her involvement. But proferment of the deposition itself may have diverged from accepted procedures governing nullification of an extant conjugal contract in return for a payment that we cannot determine. Moreover, the aunt's offer may not have been appropriately lodged before witnesses who could certify its acceptance by the plaintiff's betrothed spouse [the *ghulām*]. None of these circumstances can be recovered. Still, no challenge to the aunt's defense of her niece was raised. As the plaintiff's sole relation willing to act on her behalf, the aunt was prepared to buy an abusive husband out of the marriage and secure her niece a legal separation. That the aunt played no part in the case once it was filed with the Dawādār possibly implied lingering disputes over the legitimacy of the aunt's action, and the *ghulām*'s readiness to nullify the initial contract.

DEFENSE OF THE 'GHULĀM' BY HIS PATRON: COUNTERING A CHARGE OF RAPE

The betrothed spouse was not summoned to the appeals court alone. His patron [*ustadh*], a Mamlūk officer by the name of Fāris, accompanied him. This individual angrily denied the charges lodged against his bondsman, who presumably was not legally entitled to speak for himself in a public forum. Al-Ṣayrafī described the officer as a militarist [*jundī*] and Sulṭānī Mamlūk, an officer who had served one of the reigning autocrat's predecessors. While seemingly a passing aside by al-Ṣayrafī, the *amīr*'s status was highly relevant to his bellicose demeanor. Sulṭānī Mamlūks rarely enjoyed primacy of place in the military hierarchy of Cairo since the incumbent ruler doubted their loyalty. Sulṭānī Mamlūks were routinely divested of the land grants [*iqṭā*'s] that had sustained their profligate lifestyles. This officer was accordingly disposed to assume a hostile stance toward the current regime even before this case was brought before the Major-Domo. And he was particularly inclined to antagonism toward the sulṭān's right-hand man, Yaṣḥbak min Maḥdā, who had bolstered his own position by rooting out suspected malcontents within the ranks of *amīrs* elevated by Qāyṭbāy's forbear.<sup>7</sup>

The Mamlūk Fāris challenged the claims of abuse and abandonment raised against his bondsman on the grounds of previous probity confirmed by official witnesses. The identity of those who had allegedly sanctioned the *ghulām*'s behavior al-Şayrafī did not specify. But the *amīr*'s assertion carried sufficient weight to block resolution of the case temporarily. The Dawādār Yaşh̄bak was compelled to recall al-Şayrafī and interrogate him about his grant of permission for a betrothal of the *ghulām* to a legal minor. By implication, the officer could counter accusations of wrongful deflowerment lodged against his bondsman with the marriage contract al-Şayrafī had himself drawn up. The officer's challenge was serious enough to compel al-Şayrafī's summons to the *maẓālim* and to warrant a stay of proceedings until the witnesses who had signed the marriage contract could be located. Only when the *jundī* eventually produced them, after a delay of several days, did the Dawādār feel confident enough to rule on the girl's behalf and declare the officer and his bondsman guilty.

But of what charges? It was apparently during the delay that sordid details about the forced violation of the plaintiff's virginity were proven to the Major-Domo's satisfaction. Again by implication, the *ghulām*, abetted by his patron, had committed an act of rape against a member of the military elite, an assault encouraged by his own patron. The charge of underage deflowerment was upheld by the provisos written into the contract al-Şayrafī had composed, which sanctioned the plaintiff's betrothal while still a minor but demanded preservation of her virginity while underage. Al-Şayrafī insisted that he had not included consummation among the marital rights of the plaintiff's betrothed spouse. Once the witnesses were summoned to verify the provisos (and thus possibly to disavow a countercharge of subsequent forgery of the original text by the *jundī*), the Major-Domo sustained the plaintiff's claims. Note that after the *ghulām* suffered a severe lashing, his patron was compelled to endure the humiliation of a public denunciation for a crime his servant had committed.

Due to his complicity in an act of rape, the Mamlūk Fāris was forced to atone with an act of public contrition in which he bore the victim aloft on his shoulders before the gaze of spectators. Although this kind of atonement ritual carried symbolic significance, it did not settle the case. It nonetheless deflated the officer's status

in the community and quite likely absolved the plaintiff from any responsibility for the loss of her virginity—thereby rendering her an acceptable prospect for a second marriage, and the restoration of income and reputation that appertained thereto.

#### SETTLEMENT OF THE AFFAIR BY THE SENIOR ḤANĀFĪ 'QĀDĪ'

Al-Ṣayrafī noted the intercession of officials attending the appellate proceedings on the Mamlūk Fāris's behalf. Following the *ghulām's* flogging and his patron's public humiliation, the Major-Domo was willing to send them before the chief Ḥanāfī justice, Muhibb al-Dīn ibn al-Shiḥna. This senior magistrate was apparently instructed by the Dawādār to close the case with a judgment both sides would find acceptable. The voicing of pleas for clemency thus seem to have carried considerable weight in a hearing that had placed a male peer on trial for his complicity in a servant's offense. Whether the *jundī's* mediators actually challenged the Dawādār's ruling and punishments is indeterminate, since al-Ṣayrafī provided no further elaboration. But the lack of explanatory remarks quite likely connoted the mediators' acknowledgment of guilt on the part of the bondsman and his patron.

A more plausible scenario would involve the mediators' advocacy of class privilege on the *jundī's* part even in the face of his proven culpability. The Ḥanāfī *qāḍī* ultimately obliged the *ghulām* and *jundī* to pay four *dīnārs* to the plaintiff, after which they were presumably absolved of any further obligations to her and set at liberty. The figure of four *dīnārs* may have represented a compromise between what the girl's aunt had offered in the promissory note and the *qāḍī's* estimate of fair restitution to the plaintiff. Recall that al-Ṣayrafī made no further statements about her petition for a second marriage with an appropriate dowry. But since the Dawādār acknowledged the *ghulām's* violation of the plaintiff's conjugal rights and his lodging of a false claim distorting the original provisos of their betrothal—for which the girl had been fined a *dīnār*—the text clearly depicted Yaṣḥbak's taking the plaintiff's side.

Yet if the girl's total liability had amounted to eight *dīnārs*, she received only half of that figure back. Although the guilty parties were compelled to ameliorate her destitution, they did not return the entire sum they had seized from her unjustly. The Ḥanāfī *qāḍī's* final resolution of the case therefore took into account the

transgression committed by the *ghulām* and his patron, but released them from any further responsibility upon their return of half the money they had taken from a female minor under duress and her self-proclaimed guardian. Since the Dawādār allowed the case to close with Ibn al-Shihna's negotiated settlement, he apparently was satisfied with the humiliation he had inflicted on the guilty parties. Al-Ṣayrafī concluded his discussion of the case with remarks about their previous terrorizing of a quarter in Cairo. The two had set themselves up as local despoilers who made life miserable for the neighborhood merchants and property holders. Al-Ṣayrafī stated that their public disgrace was sufficient to diminish their stature, and presumably their menace to the district. Yet he marveled to find the *ghulām* walking about the day after his flogging, seemingly no worse the wear for his experience.

This case raised a number of juxtaposed issues. Conjugal rights idealized in *sharī'a* were in practice qualified by prerogatives of class supported by the defendants' peers in an appellate court convened to uphold these prerogatives. Both the plaintiff and the two defendants were acknowledged as members of the Mamlūk elite, although to differing degrees. The girl derived her status from her absent parents. The *ghulām* received his in consequence of his bondage to a retired officer. The *jundī* alone could claim a legally defined rank as an out-of-service *amīr* who had served in a former sultān's regiments. The salient feature of this fascinating episode stems from its palpable tension between violation of principle and solidarity of class. The Major-Domo, convinced that an underage girl from his own caste had been reduced to poverty by a wayward ruffian, sustained her claim of abuse and abandonment. He flogged the individual guilty of sexual assault and stripped his *jundī* patron of the tunic that proclaimed his formal station. Yet, having restored the plaintiff's eligibility for marriage and neutralized the defendants' propensity to plunder a district, the Dawādār was ready to dismiss any further charges and terminate proceedings. The *jundī* may have been demoted from his former rank but he, along with his bondsman, departed the trial as a free man. The girl could offer herself to one of the suitors al-Ṣayrafī recommended for her on the basis of dowry. The *mazālim* court thus upheld the primacy of conjugal rights spelled out in revealed law over prerogatives of the class whose litigious interests it embodied. Yet the complex, two-

phased arrangement that was eventually negotiated set the guilty parties at liberty with no binding obligations to the girl they had violated. She did not reclaim all the money they had seized from her. Nor did al-Şayrafī leave us with the impression that the two culprits suffered so egregiously as to preclude their mischief another day. Although the Dawādār vigorously prosecuted their offense, he heeded calls for clemency from members of his own consultative council and allowed the Ḥanāfī *qādī* to absolve the defendants from subsequent litigation.

In such vein was this tension between conflicting rights and prerogatives resolved through a procedure that recognized both. The afflicted party in this case emerged with her honor intact and her eligibility restored. Those who had injured her walked free, cleared of further charges. Was their public chastisement an effective deterrent to future criminal abuse? We cannot know. The author of this episode revealed a case to us that depicted a judicial process acutely attuned to the tensions implicit in its opposing interests. Did this process resolve them to the mutual satisfaction of the parties involved? Abuse inflicted because of gender gain was clearly rectified, but the offenders' freedom, if not their free license, was restored in the aftermath of their peers' mediation. We cannot, after all, be certain that the girl succeeded in finding a suitable match. Yet al-Şayrafī left us with a vivid image of the ruffianly *ghulām* walking about the next day "like any healthy person." Upon whom, or for what miracle, was the chronicler moved to call down God's praise three times? One wonders.

#### NOTES

1. Al-Şayrafī wrote two prominent historical works: *Nuḍḥat al-Nufūs wa'l-Abdān fī Tawāriḫ al-Zamān* [A Diversion Spiritual and Corporeal in the Annals of Time], ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī, 3 vols. (Cairo: National Library press, 1971-73) and *Inbā' al-Ḥaşr bi-Abnā' al-'Aşr* [Informing the Lion about Scions of the Age] same ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1970). The first surveyed Egyptian politics from 786/1384 to 879/1475. The second was intended to celebrate Sulţān Qāyṭbāy's reign (the 'Lion' in its title). The author hoped to secure a place in the monarch's entourage by presenting his work as a gift, but no record of its completion remains. The extant portion treats only the years 873-77/1468-73. Parts of the years 885 and 886/1480-81 are appended. Nonetheless, the four complete annals offer insights into judicial

controversies available in few contemporary works. For biographical details, see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, Supplement (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937-42), vol. 2, p. 41, no.12. I appreciate the advice of my colleagues J.O. Hunwick and Muḥammad Eissa on matters of terminology in the Arabic text.

2. On the *mazālim* court in the Mamlūk regime, see Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Secular Justice in an Islamic State: Mazalim under the Bahri Mamlūks, 662-789/1264-1387* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1985): especially pp. 31-34 (*mazālim* and *sharī'a*), p. 92 (*Dawādār*), p. 123 (*mazālim* as a court of appeals); Émile Tyan, *Histoire de l'organisation judiciaire en pays d'Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), part 2, chapter 1: "la justice des *mazālim*."

3. Although the Qur'ān addresses the status of women and their conjugal rights in numerous verses, it does not deal specifically with abandonment by parents or by a spouse. Verses that could be interpreted as relevant by analogy: 2:240-41 (on provision for widows), 67:1 (on residency after divorce); 4:2-10 (on protection of female orphans, parentless rather than abandoned), 20-21 (on right of divorcée to keep her dowry); 24:33 (on right to chastity, although not by a free woman), 58-59 (on chastity rights before puberty). Verses numbered according to Muhammad M. Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran*, bilingual ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976).

4. On the term '*ghulām*,' see R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1892), p. 225, who only mentions female slaves of the 'Abbasid harem; H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966), p. 683; D. Sourdel, s.v. "*Ghulām* i.—The Caliphate," EI(2), vol. 2, pp. 1079-81, who provides an evolutionary definition. *Ghulām* came to mean a military slave similar in function, if not in status, to the Mamlūk. Contextually, a *ghulām* owned by a senior *amīr* in the Egyptian Mamlūk institution should be regarded as his servant, aide or bondsman, rather than as a chattel slave.

5. While minor status is not uniformly fixed chronologically in Islamic Law [the *sharī'a*], the most common age for females cited by jurists is nine years or below. There are many references to "coming of age," which by implication occurs after attainment of puberty. See J. Schacht, s.v. "*Nikāḥ*," EI(2), vol. 8, p. 27. A girl may be betrothed as a minor, but her consummation is delayed until puberty to assure preservation of her virginity. Note that Schacht mentions the Ḥanāfi interpretation of consent, in which "every (male) blood relative acting as wali [guardian] is entitled to give a virgin under age in marriage without her consent; but a woman married in this way by another than her ascendant (father or grandfather) is entitled on coming of age to demand that her marriage be declared void [*faskḥ*] by the kadi." See also J.L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1982), pp.

17-19, 24-26, 34-35 (divorce by judicial process); M. Abu Zahra, "Family Law" in Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny, eds., *Law in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1955), pp. 134, 137-40 (question of suitability); p. 146-49 (terminating the marriage contract); p. 155 (on age of dependence); p. 156 (guardianship).

6. Eliyahu Ashtor, *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'orient médiévale* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1969), p. 278.

7. On the career of Yaṣḥbak min Maḥdī, see his Arabic Biography in al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' fi A'yān al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* [The light that illumines Notables of the Ninth (Hijri) Century], ed. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudsī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1934) vol. 10, pp. 272, no. 1077. For his career consult Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamlūk Sulṭāns al-Ashraf Qaytbay and Qansuh al-Ghawri in Egypt* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), pp. 43-46.

INVISIBLE WOMEN:  
RESIDENTS OF EARLY  
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ISTANBUL

*Yvonne J. Seng*

*Legal records from early sixteenth-century Istanbul are examined to interrogate the social and economic roles of women within local communities, especially women's use of the law courts.*

While visiting İstanbul during the later years of the reign of Sulṭān Sulaymān (926–74/1520–66), the European observer Hans Dernschwam recorded his impressions of Ottoman women. “Turkish” (that is, Muslim) women, he noted in his journal in 1553, did not have the same freedom as local Christians: they were confined to their homes and were not seen by strangers.<sup>1</sup> These women were idle and extremely lazy, he claimed. They never cooked, for example; instead, they sewed or lay around and ate soup, yoghurt, *ayran* (a yoghurt-based beverage), fruits, onions, and garlic; nor did they go to the market to buy or sell, activities undertaken by the young boys or servants of the household. On the rare occasions on which these women ventured into public, it was either to visit the mosque or to take part in the weekly excursion to the public baths.<sup>2</sup> Even as they passed through the street, Muslim women remained separated from the rest of society, secure in what Dernschwam referred to as a “fountain of layers” of thin black tulle through which they could comfortably see but not be seen.<sup>3</sup> The image Dernschwam presents of these women is one of isolation and separation from public interaction. They were largely invisible.

Perhaps if Dernschwam had ventured into the office of the local *kadı* he would have gained another perspective of Ottoman women, Muslim and non-Muslim. He would have learned, for example,



that behind the walls and veils that obscured his view, women were investing in local and long-distance trade, giving and taking loans—from a few *akçe* to sizeable purses—and buying and selling real property, across boundaries of class, gender, and religion. Whereas some undertook their business by proxy through agents, others acted more directly. Dernschwam would have discovered also that during those public excursions which he recorded, women at the bathhouse stole from each other and did not hesitate to take the thief to court, and that at the mosque others were breaking their agreements to provide support for the imām. While their more pious sisters, often from the imperial household, were establishing exemplary foundations at the mosque to build libraries and soup kitchens to feed the local colony of lepers, yet others were founding *vakıfs* that would provide loans at high rates. These invisible women fought in public, bought livestock, defended themselves in court against accusations of adultery, and rented stalls in the local *bedestan*. And when a servant ruined the laundry, her mistress took her to court for compensation. From the range of activities recorded in the court records, it seems hardly possible that these women had time to make the yoghurt, let alone to lie around and eat it.

Why does this disparity occur between Dernschwam's observations and the perspective presented by the local court records? The key is found in the observer's own statement: Muslim women were not seen by strangers. The seclusion and veiling of Muslim women was also noted by Oghier Ghiselin de Busbecq, emissary of the Holy Roman Emperor to the court of Sultān Sulaymān. Turkish [Muslim] women, he reported, were kept "shut up at home and so [hidden] that they hardly see the light."<sup>4</sup> But Busbecq introduced the important element of status to his discussion of Ottoman women: the sequestration of women was a sign of their families' wealth and, as such, men of the wealthier classes and higher ranks made it a condition "that when they marry, that their wives shall never set foot outside their houses."<sup>5</sup> Busbecq confirmed that although women may have enjoyed a certain amount of freedom within the privacy of their homes, in public they were completely covered to ensure their modesty, a characteristic profoundly valued by Muslim Turkish men.

In evaluating Dernschwam's description one should also consider the notion of mistaken identity. Although Dernschwam reports that

the costumes of women were so distinctive that subtle differences in headdress, for example, indicated the wearer's religious and ethnic origins, in his desire to see beyond the wall and behind the veil he associated with Muslim women, he may have overlooked the street life around him.<sup>6</sup> Personal possessions recorded in the estate-records of early sixteenth-century İstanbul show women of the city to have been quite colorful and confirm that most women, Muslim and non-Muslim, owned a multitude of headscarves, in a pyrotechnic range of colors. Their estates also confirm that they owned and wore a variety of head coverings and, in some cases, face coverings, but few women owned the full-length black cloaks or body coverings that Dernschwam identified as being worn in public. The women who did so were of a higher socio-economic status or showed signs of religious commitment. This suggests that women of low socio-economic level passed in the streets without body mantles, largely unnoticed or discounted, belonging neither to a discernible ethnic or religious group nor to the closely-swathed women of privilege to whom Dernschwam's attentions were drawn.

I shall now consider the *shari'a* law court registers recorded during the first decade of the reign of Sultan Sulaymân.<sup>7</sup> The records used are from Üsküdar, one of the three districts of the imperial city; although they predate Dernschwam's visit, the information they contain is still applicable. Most of the women of Üsküdar whose estates were included in the registers were not from high-status households. The strictures relating to women from high-income households, as described by both Dernschwam and Busbecq, were likely practiced to a lesser degree.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, for all women of lower socio-economic status, Muslim or non-Muslim, physical mobility and access to public space were imperative. Access to the street meant more than a stream of space traversed on the way to the mosque or the bath-house: access to the markets, for example, was necessary in the absence of servants and otherwise unemployed males who could serve as messengers. Moreover, court records substantiate that even women who were confined to the immediate radius of the hearth or to the seclusion of an upper socio-economic level household were able to participate in the dynamic market of social and economic exchange, which, like the traditional street vendor, often came to their door.

Dernschwam identified freedom of movement with activity in the public sphere; that is, he suggested that the veiling and sequestration of women prevented them from interaction with the community. In so doing, he underestimated the level of activity in places which he was unable to observe, and overlooked what was taking place around him. The scope of these activities becomes evident not in the journals of such travelers but in the records of the local law courts. The types of cases women brought before the *kadi* provides insight into their use of the law courts. In addition, the social and economic transactions in which women were engaged on a daily basis becomes clear through the claims they initiated, the disputes in which they were summoned, and the estate records which they left behind. In short, these records provide access to some otherwise obscure activities of women overlooked by or inaccessible to the above-mentioned travelers.

This essay focuses on the financial transactions in which Ottoman women engaged within a local community of Istanbul, both in the public arena and within range of the hearth. Beginning with the two points of destination given by Dernschwam, the mosque and the public baths, it also looks at another destination, the law courts. Examination of the range of activities addressed in the law courts will provide a wider perspective on the public and private transactions and concerns of women. Since it is estimated that between fifteen and thirty percent of the population of the city was non-Muslim at the beginning of the sixteenth century, non-Muslim women will also be included in this analysis, especially since many concerns and activities expressed in their cases appear universal to Ottoman women. Of particular note are issues of inheritance and property transfer, areas in which women were particularly energetic.

#### TWO EXAMPLES: IN SEARCH OF CLEANLINESS AND GODLINESS

Court records provide some intimate details of everyday transactions and relationships which escaped the eye of foreign sojourners or to which they did not have access. They also provide a wealth of detail not seen in other, complementary official records. Two such examples involve the destinations noted by Dernschwam for which Muslim women entered the public domain: the bath house and the mosque. Through the local records we find that on at least three

occasions these expeditions resulted in disputes which led to the courthouse.

When Sulaymān ascended the throne, Üsküdar was beginning to emerge as the religious center which it would become during and after his reign. The 1546 register of foundations for the city of İstanbul record that four women had established pious foundations [*vakıfı*] in Üsküdar by this time, and the range was typical of the many that would follow.<sup>9</sup> Ayşe, the daughter of the *şüfî* Pir Mehmed, for example, established a foundation for the reading of sections of the Qur'ān for the dead (no date given), and in March 1543, the wealthy Gülfem Hatun, one of the sultan's manumitted slaves, established a foundation for the construction of a timber-frame mosque in a downtown quarter that would also bear Gülfem Hatun's name. Two remaining foundations indicate a more pragmatic cast. At the beginning of October 1497, Hafza Hatun bint Ali established a foundation for house loans. A similar foundation for loans was established on behalf of Şah-huban bint Hamza Beğ by the learned gentleman Mevlana Kadri, son of Mehmed, and in July 1523 the foundation made a loan of 9,000 *akçe* to a Muslim male (3.98b), the largest single loan registered in this period. The *vakıf* of Şah-huban Hatun also had an unspecified claim placed against it in 1528 (6.45a). These central records are not comprehensive as the local court registers also record that at least one other woman, Sara bint Mehmed, the wife of Yahşi bin Abdullah, had established a foundation in the 1520s. In April 1522, her cash foundation gave two loans for the sum of 1,500 *akçe* to two Muslim men (3.52b–53a).

In 1557, Sulaymān's daughter, Mihramah Sultan, added her famed mosque complex to others which already dotted the hills and shores surrounding the town. Built by the imperial architect Sinan, Mihramah's noteworthy complex included a mosque, school, library, bath house, and an *imaret* [soup kitchen] which fed travellers and the indigent. Succeeding generations of women from the imperial household contributed at least nine complexes to the religious architecture that helped define the town's social landscape. Research into the records of the town is preliminary, but it is known that at least thirty women added wells, fountains, schools, libraries, and lodges for timekeepers to the mosques.<sup>10</sup> The *imaret* built by Büyük Valide Sultan is notable since it also included a foundation to help feed male and female inmates of the local lepers' lodge situated on

the outskirts of the Karaca Ahmet Cemetery. The allowance reported for the lepers consisted of two portions of bread in the morning with soup, pilaf, and meat in the evenings, and on Mondays and Thursdays, a dish of rice pudding and saffron [*zerde*].<sup>11</sup>

The good intentions propelling the foundation or upkeep of mosques were sometimes fleeting. As fundraiser for a project, the imam also had to live by the adage of "getting it in writing," and, when he failed to do so, he resorted to the courts. Sometime before April 1530, [Şeruda] Hatun bint Abdullah, a convert, made a verbal agreement with the learned gentleman Suleiman Halife, overseer of Davud Paşa Camii in the commercial center of Üsküdar (6.117a). She agreed to establish a foundation of 2,000 *akçe*, 1,000 *akçe* of which was to go towards support of whomever was the *müezzin* of the mosque, and the other 1,000 *akçe* of which was to go towards whomever was the imam at a smaller mosque, the *mescid* in the village of Bulgurlu in the hills overlooking the town. Apparently she changed her mind and reneged on her promise. Furthermore, when Sulaymān Halife took her to court, represented by her agent, she vigorously denied the arrangement. Her assertion was investigated by the upstanding Muslims of the community (including an imam), who declared that the agreement was binding. Similarly, Fatima bint Ahmed, a resident of the Kirdeci Mosque Quarter, had apparently made a similar agreement with the imam Üveys before her death (6.146a). In it she promised to leave a bequest of 1,000 *akçe* from her dowry and another 1,000 *akçe* from her estate to establish a *vakıf* for the mosque. Fatima died in March 1530 without formalizing this bequest and therefore the imam brought one of her heirs, Selime bint Avranos, to court and made the claim against her. After the matter was successfully investigated in his favor, the imam took possession of the amount.

Attached to another *imaret*, belonging to the Mehmed Paşa mosque-complex, was a bath-house [*hamam*] frequented by the women of Üsküdar. Public baths had long been part of the social and economic nexus of women's activities in the Ottoman Empire, but in late September 1528 it was the site of a different kind of transaction. At that time, Nar Hatun, a guest at the *imaret*, decided to make use of the facilities (6.56a). After disrobing and entering the baths, she returned to collect her clothes and found that certain items including a skullcap, a kerchief, and a shirt (alternatively listed

as including a fine gauze veil, a towel and a Syrian kerchief) were missing. She immediately accused another woman, Şah-huban Hatun, who was present at the baths, and took her to court for the alleged theft. Şah-huban, however, denied the theft, claiming that Nar Hatun had found her things inside the very same box in which she had left them. Nevertheless, Nar's accusation was investigated, and, upon verification, Şah-huban confessed to the theft. Her punishment was apparently swift as an addendum of the same date stated that the requisite amount (of punishment) had been performed.

#### THE LAW COURTS: A PUBLIC EXCURSION

As seen above, a third destination for excursions by women into the public domain was the judge's office. The matters that took them there were often mundane, but these in themselves indicate the access women had to the court. Although many of their activities were hearth-based, women's interaction with the community and excursions into the public arena were more extensive than previously recognized.<sup>12</sup>

Dernschwam speaks clearly of the restricted use of public places by Muslim women. Although we cannot discern the frequency with which they used them, court records indicate that women not only made use of public thoroughfares, but also defended their right to pass unimpeded through them. While walking along the path in the nearby village of İstavros, for example, Dervişe bint Mehmed's passage was blocked by Nasuh bin Abdullah, who appears elsewhere in the registers as a police officer (3.58a). She took him to court on a charge amounting to assault. By her name, it is possible that Dervişe was a member of one of the several heterodox *şîfî* orders whose lodges accumulated around Üsküdar and which generally accepted women adherents. Moreover, the behavior of some women in public and semi-public spaces was often quite forthright. In an argument witnessed (and attested to) by the mother of a high-ranking notable of the region, Nergis bint Abdullah was brought to court for swearing at another woman, Mansure (3.83a). Several other women were brought to court for immoral or unsuitable public behavior: Husni bint Abdullah, Fatima bint Abdullah, and Emine bint Abdullah, all converts, were brought to court for fighting with or attacking men (3.7b, 8a, and 73a, respectively).

Unsuitable or immoral behavior, private or public, that impacted the community, was also brought before the court for disciplinary action. Full details are not given, but Kismet bin Davud brought a claim against his step-daughter for her offensive behavior towards male guests in his house (3.83a). Women such as Zūhal bint Hamza and Nefise bint Abdullah who were accused of adultery or prostitution [*zina*] were also brought to court (3.2a, 8a–9a, 87a, and 88b) and, as with their male counterparts, punished for immoral conduct.<sup>13</sup> The case of Nefise offers interesting insight into the use of courts by women. She was accused of entertaining canonically non-related [*na-mahrem*] men in her husband's caftan shop for "who knows how many days and nights," as well as cursing, trickery and deception. After her husband tentatively defended her against the "liars and busybodies in the community," he was ordered to post bond for her. He then apparently repudiated her by divorcing her, an action which usually followed a decision of adultery (3.88a). When he was delinquent in his divorce settlement, however, Nefise, not satisfied with bringing a claim against him, took advantage of the opportunity to use her voice in court and personally defend herself against the original charges of adultery (3.90b).

Within a community, the *sharī'a* courts were used in matters either where the record of law was considered advisable, such as property transfer, divorce, personal surety, and loans, or to resolve disputes that could not be settled within the community. For most, the courts were used as a last resort, when disputes could not be solved, or compromise reached, within the family or between members of the community, without the decision of an outsider, the *kadı*. In general, the local court served as adjunct to the community.

Women appear as both claimants and defendants in cases requiring record and recourse.<sup>14</sup> Their lives and actions are also captured in the estate records, which in the case of disputed inheritance or intestacy were also lodged with the courts. Most of the cases involved matters of financial concern. Many were intrafamilial and involved the contestation or upholding of inheritance or divorce settlements. These two occasions were important as they involved the economic well-being of a woman and her family, and one of the onerous effects of widowhood or divorce upon a family was the rapid remarriage of women.<sup>15</sup>

Inheritance, along with dowry settlements, contributed to a woman's discretionary income, which was theoretically protected by law. Although the law courts were considered the protectors of women, it is likely from the small percentage of cases in which women initiated cases that social pressure within the community encouraged women to settle their disputes within the privacy of the family or the immediate community. The wide range and content of the court cases that therefore do appear attest to both the attitude women held towards use of the law courts and their interaction with the community in which they lived. What is important, then, is not the relatively small number of cases, but their range and content.

The theft in the bath-house mentioned above provides a clear example of how women used the law courts to resolve disputes between themselves. Another case, one in which a woman took her female slave to court in a claim concerning ruined laundry, is also indicative of how women used the court to solve everyday problems (3.76a). In it the *kadı* decided that the slave had to pay her mistress, Gümüş Hatun, one hundred *akçe*, an amount representing several month's pay, in compensation for the fine piece of gauze, used as a head cloth or face veil, even though she claimed she had given it to someone else to launder.<sup>16</sup> Gümüş appears elsewhere in the court records and stands out for her commercial enterprise: she was a major partner in a trading investment with eleven others (including two other women), and was also involved in giving loans (3:92a–93a, 3:16a). In another dispute, Şah-nun bint Yusuf appeared in court with Fatima bint Etcı who, she claimed, owed her a quilt, a mattress, a sheet, a cover, a rug, and an embroidered kerchief. The source of the dispute is not mentioned, but the case appears in the form of a settlement (6.45b).

Although women were often represented in court or in a business transaction by a proxy or agent [*vekil*], often a male relative of immediate family, they just as often actively participated in these transactions. They appeared in court in person irrespective of the gender of the other participants, in cases which they initiated or in which they themselves appeared as defendants. Furthermore, the court documents clearly indicate that the use of agents was not restricted to Muslim women, but was used by Muslim men as well as non-Muslims, male or female. In the settlement of her husband's estate, for example, the Christian woman Evranaki bint Nikola and



her minor son and daughter were represented by an agent (6.94a), and whereas the Greek Irini bint Yorgi personally settled the estate of her deceased husband and several claims upon it, her daughter was represented by her husband (6.108b). The legality of the proxy, agent, or representative had to be first recognized by the court before he could serve in that capacity.<sup>17</sup>

Non-Muslim women could just as well address their disputes to their local priests as leaders of their own communities, yet they also took their complaints to the *kadi's* office for settlement.<sup>18</sup> Christian women appeared in the Muslim courts on a number of different occasions. A series of such cases involved leaders of the Christian Greek community of İstavros and illustrates the access to and use both women and religious functionaries of that community made of the Islamic court. At the beginning of May 1529, we learn of the possible beating death of Irini, the daughter of the priest of İstavros, Papas Yani, and the subsequent arrest of her husband, Yorgi bin Kahi Manul (6.82b). Charges were brought to the *shari'a* court by Irini's parents, both of whom were progeny of village priests: Maria, was the daughter of Papas Nikola, and her husband, Papas Yani, was the son of Papas Dimitri. Approximately ten days after the original entry, personal bond or surety was provided for Yorgi (6.89a), and Maria and her husband, represented by their agent, registered that they acknowledged that Yorgi was the murderer and that they had no dispute against him (6.89a). Although not immediately recorded, the surety was in settlement for a blood claim [*kan davası*], which came to light in early September when all parties reappeared in court. After Papas Yani and Maria's claim against Yorgi was registered, Yorgi stated that he had left security money with the clock-maker Saatçi Yani bin Demurcu. The blood claim was reconciled when he gave Irini's parents 2,500 *akçe*, after which they desisted from the claim and it was agreed that Yorgi was to be declared released from the claim (6.102b). Although we do not know whether her complaint concerned the death of her daughter, the following March Maria appeared in court to register that she absolved the unrecorded complaint she had against İlyas Çavuş, the major functionary from the same village (6.154a).

The use of the Islamic court by Maria and her family was not unique. Şutura bint Dimitri, a Greek Christian from Kuzguncuk, for example, asked that personal surety be given for Yorgi bin

Estafanos, and it was provided by Yani bin Estafanos (6.32b). No mention is made concerning the content of the dispute, however, she also then registered a complaint against Yorgi bin Estafanos and stated that a compromise had been reached.

Women appeared as claimants and defendants, in person or represented by an agent, but it was rare that they appeared as witnesses. Given that under Ḥanafī law the word of a female was assigned half the weight of a male witness, it is of interest then to find that women also provided surety for their husbands, sometimes under difficult conditions. In one particular case, we find that a Muslim woman was married to a slave-under-contract [*mükateb*] and provided surety for him. Selçuk bint Mustafa, wife of Yunus bin Abdullah, the slave convert of Dolabcı Musa, provided bond for her husband (6.134a). Another case involved the female slave, Kadem bint Abdullah, who confessed to stealing 4,000 *akçe* from her master and to giving it to Ahmed bin Abdullah (6.27a). On that occasion, Ahmed's wife, Neslihan bint Abdullah, together with two Muslim men, provided personal surety for her husband (6.27b). Women of means also provided financial surety for their husbands' undertakings. When Mehmi bin Mehmed from Mehmed Paşa Camii quarter borrowed the considerable amount of 3,000 *akçe* from the foundation of Selman Ağa Mescidi in order to buy a house, his wife Ayşe bint Şirmerd provided financial surety, an action that predicated that she had assets in excess of that amount (6.136a). Irini, along with two non-Muslim men, stood surety for her husband, Kafiri, the Greek owner of a taverna, or *meyhane*, in Üsküdar (3.103b).

#### INHERITANCE

The death of an individual set in motion a train of events that affected the family unit and often tested its very fabric. This was especially evident when the deceased individual was the husband or father, the traditional economic provider of the family unit. Heirs had a primary responsibility to settle debts incurred by the deceased and to collect those owed to the estate, and this duty often fell to the wife of the deceased. Although she could appoint an agent to act on her behalf, usually a male relative, as with other cases, women did not shy from appearing in person to present their own interests or those of their families. Often, claims were placed against other members of the family who had attempted to prevent a woman from receiving her share of an inheritance from a spouse or other

relative, and the rare cases of polygynous and second marriages resulted in their own disputes between members of the sub-families.<sup>19</sup>

A fine example of the wide range of effects from the death of a spouse is seen in a series of cases involving the above-mentioned Irini bint Yorgi, wife of the deceased Yorgi bin Taragani. The cases would be interesting enough if the subjects were only Greeks who, representative of members of the non-Muslim or *zimmi* community, used the Islamic courts to record business transactions; however, the claims on and by the estate also included Muslims and women. Most of the participants were from the village of Nerdubanlu (Merdivenköy), situated close to present-day Kadiköy along the shores of the Bosphorus and inhabited largely by Greeks who farmed its renowned vineyards, market gardens, grain fields, and orchards. Yorgi's estate was not registered with the court as was usually done in cases of dispute, and thus we do not learn the value of his holdings or gain a description of his family and other heirs. Only one child, an adult daughter, appeared in the registered cases; however, in one of the last entries we learn that at the time of her husband's death Irini was approximately five months pregnant. From the onset of claims, we can surmise that Yorgi died in mid-November 1528; the birth of their child was registered in the following March.

The series of related cases began with an unspecified compromise settlement for 2,400 *akçe* to her father, Yorgi bin Kosta, who was represented by an agent, against Yorgi and Irini (6.106b). The first business Irini attended to after this matter was her own. She registered a claim against the estate stating that a certain house in the village of Herekeduna, which was bounded on one side by a road, on another by the property of the veilmaker [*peçeci*], on the third by the land of Manul bin Sahar, and on the fourth by the land of the deceased, her husband, was hers. "The house is mine. Truly!" she exclaimed in defense. Her claim was duly checked by investigators and declared to be her property (6.107b). We thus learn that Irini was the proprietor of her own house, and, in the next entry, she then proceeded to establish ownership of another piece of land, an established orchard and a market garden removed from the site of the house (6.108a). Her land, situated near the village of Herekeduna, was bounded on three sides by the properties of three non-Muslim males: Yani, Kokuzoğlu, and Nikola bin Lazari.

Next, several claims against the estate were registered and investigated. The Muslim Mustafa Reis [captain] bin Mehmed claimed that Yorgi owed him 500 and 525 *akçe* for unspecified goods sold to him (6.108a). Gora bin Yani registered that the deceased had bought a stall [*dolab*] for 300 *akçe* and a donkey for 100 *akçe* from him (6.108a). The *zimmi* woman Manula bint Solak had loaned Yorgi 250 *akçe* with interest (6.108b), and Dimitri bin Yani claimed a debt for 250 *akçe* (6.109a). Wedged between these claims, the husband of Yorgi and Irini's daughter appeared in court to register that he was her lawful agent (6.108b), a position he then used to confirm the claim that Yorgi bin Istani of Herekeduna registered against the estate for the 950 *akçe* outstanding from the loan-with-interest he had given the deceased. Finally, Hasan bin Ali registered that he had taken an unspecified amount owed to him from the estate and that no deficit and no right remained (6.92a). This claim against Irini and the estate came some four months after the others; the last entry concerned the birth of Irini's child, Yorgi's last heir.

As seen in the case of Irini, as executrices and heirs of estates, women did not hesitate to settle accounts upon their husband's estates or to challenge others.<sup>20</sup> Since it was in the best interest of the surviving family to collect outstanding debts due to the estate, women who had become responsible for the execution of their husbands' estates both pursued debtors and brought them to court. After the death of her husband in April 1530, [Şah-huban] bint Abdullah from the village of Başa Büyüklü brought Mehmed bin Hacı and Mehmed bin Abdullah to court for unspecified debts owed to her husband (6.160b). Kasım served as agent for both Şah-huban bint Kepçi, wife of the deceased Muharrem bin Yunus, and their daughter, Huban, in a claim against shopkeeper [*bazarci*] Yusuf bin Dana Halil, resident of Çavuş quarter of İstanbul. A compromise of 916 *akçe* was reached on Yusuf's debt and was paid in full (6.56b). Similarly, women were also held responsible for the payment from the estate of their husband's debts and their own inheritance could not be concluded until they had done so. Sitti bin Kemal, for example, wife of the deceased sweetmaker [*helvacı*] Hacı Mehmed bin Husein, and son Husein had two claims registered against them for 1,000 *akçe* and 1,700 *akçe* for the purchase of grapes (6.52a–b).

These claims sometimes involved other family members, and the disputes often concerned the outstanding portions of their dowries,

payment of which could be delayed [*mehr-i müeccel*], or loans they had made to their husbands. In early August 1529, for example, Selçuk bint Mustafa claimed 2,000 *akçe* in dowry from the estate of her wealthy husband Musa, the cotton-beater [*Hallaç*; 6.99b]), whereas Fatima bint Hacı Mehmi, wife of the deceased Ali bin Yusuf, claimed 500 *akçe* against her husband's estate (6.8a–b). Surur bint Abdullah was persistent in her claim for the remaining 400 *akçe* from her dowry upon the death of her husband, Bostancı Yusuf bin Abdullah (6.40b). In late May 1528, a month after first registering her dispute, Surur again appeared in court claiming that the agent of the adult and minor children of the deceased had still not paid her. Her action proved effective for it was recorded that Mustafa bin Mehmed, agent of the other heirs, had finally met her demand (6.41b). The unnamed wife of the deceased Ahmed bin Kasım from Üsküdar sent her agent to register two sizeable outstanding loans of 900 *akçe* and 1,000 *akçe*, together with interest due from her husband's estate (6.91b; 6.92b).

Although we do not know the subject of the dispute, we know that Devlet bint Abdullah, wife of the deceased Mehmed bin Yunus, registered a dispute she had with Kemal, her husband's son (6.34a). When İne bint İsa from the village of Reislü tried to collect a debt of 500 *akçe* for a loan with interest she had made to the deceased Salih, his heir Lutfullah denied it in court; nevertheless, her claim was investigated and verified (6.7a). Hadice bint Fatima took her half-brother, Musa bin Kutbeddin, to court in order to receive the 200 *akçe* from their father's estate that had been appointed to her (3.4a). Compromise agreements [*bedel-i sulh*] were a solution to these family disputes as seen with Melike bint Mürsel who had not received her share of her father's estate from other members of her family (3.2a). She was allotted two vineyards in Bulgurlu in exchange as part of a compromise agreement. Similarly, an agreement of 150 *akçe* was reached between a mother and daughter over the division of an estate (3.106a). In claiming support for herself after the death of her husband, Nefise from İstavros, represented by her agent, the imam of the same village, Mevlana Mustafa bin Yusuf, requested the sale of orchards valued at 1,000 *akçe* from her husband's and son's estates (6.64a). [Tohin] bint Abdullah was represented by her agent Hacı Bekir bin Abdullah in a claim of 2,700 *akçe* outstanding from her inheritance (3.20a).

When women were primary or sole heirs of an estate, they often had to claim their share from the overseer of the *beytülmal*, or public finances. Şerife-bol Hatun, for example, a resident of Üsküdar, appeared in court on behalf of her daughter to claim an inheritance that Timurhan bin İsmail, the *emin* of Üsküdar, had taken into security. She had it recorded that the *emin* had handed over their share of estate and possessions, and swore that no further complaint existed (6.57a). When the *zimmi* Nikola bin Lazari died in the village of Çengelköy in mid-summer 1529, he left a sizeable estate of 19,218 *akçe* (6.94a), which was overseen by the court. Evranaki bint Nikola and her minor son Dimitri and daughter Taranuz were represented by their agent Sinan bin Doğan in claiming it. Similarly, [Rabiye] bint Dilman from Mehmed Paşa quarter was represented by her agent when she claimed her father's possessions from his estate, which had been given into the safekeeping of the court that same summer (6.96a). At the end of February 1530, Asul bint El-Hacı Kasım, wife of the deceased merchant [*tüccar*] Hacı Sun'ullah bin Ahmed from Karaman village, was advised of her husband's death by a partner with whom he had been travelling, and a list of goods, including a gold-worked Firengi caftan, was registered with the court and given into her possession (6.142b).

#### INVESTMENT

Like their sisters in Ottoman Anatolia, the women of Üsküdar were characterized by their entrepreneurial spirit.<sup>21</sup> Women of all levels, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, were actively involved in financial transactions of the community. They may have received money or property through the passive means of dowry and inheritance, but their records of investment show that they were active in husbanding it. They channeled it into real property, interest-bearing loans, and domestic production, as well as investment partnerships.

For the most part, agreements and contracts within the community remained oral, and it is usually in the context of a dispute that we learn of the wide range of financial activities in which members of the community were engaged. In August 1523, for example, Captain İlyas bin Abdullah died in the commercial quarter of Selman Ağa, in the caravanserai complex of the same name (3.135a). His estate was noticeable for the small ship he owned and likely used for regional trade, as well as the high proportion of indebtedness,

which characterized other small traders and merchants, but little else. It was not until two months after his death that we learn that the captain had been engaged in a *mudaraba* partnership involving 12 residents of Üsküdar for a total of 8,200 *akçe* (3.92b–93a) and that three of these investors were women.<sup>22</sup> One, the aforementioned Gümüş Hatun bint Abdullah (of the ruined laundry), had not only made one of the largest investments here (1,200 *akçe*), but had also made another investment with a male partner for 2,000 *akçe* that had come to term twenty months earlier (3.16b). Emine Hatun bint Mehmed and Dur-cihan bint Hamid had invested the smaller, but no less important, amounts of 500 and 300 *akçe*, respectively.

There was no court record of either the agreement or the cargo, and had it not been for the untimely death of the captain, the participation of these women in this trading investment would have passed unnoticed. This investment illustrates the relatively small and unregistered transactions in which the community engaged on a daily basis. Each investment share was not noteworthy, but collectively they represent a significant sum. The above agreement, albeit a single example, was probably typical of those engaged in by local women, who did not allow their cash to remain idle.

In general, Ottoman towns and villages thrived on small, informal credit transactions. Whether deferred payments for goods and services rendered or straightforward loans, few were formalized: it is usually in the event of a sudden death or a dispute that evidence of these was brought before the *kadı*. The practice was widespread—the amounts could be as small as a few *akçe*—and the one-on-one personal basis of credit provided a general underpinning for daily business engaged in by all kinds of merchants and artisans, from itinerant vendors to farmers' wives with extra eggs or fruit to sell. Moreover, the practice of usury or the giving of loans with interest [*karz-i hasen*] was widely accepted in Ottoman society, the interest often disguised in the form of a cloth sale equal to a ten-to-twenty percent interest rate. As will be seen below, women made wide use of these credit relations.

Although we might expect to find a financial network among women whereby they transacted loans or transferred property among themselves, and particularly among their co-religionists, this did not appear to be the case. Indeed, the records of their financial transactions indicate a diverse religious, ethnic, and social mix of

both creditors and debtors representative of the financial interaction of the area in general. A case involving Nefise bint Abdullah is noteworthy not only for the size of the loan (5,000 *akçe*) which she had taken from the learned gentleman Hoca Abbas bin İbrahim, but also because she agreed to pay twenty percent interest in the form of the purchase of a piece of cloth (6.137a). Similarly, before her death, Emine made a loan for an unrecorded amount to another woman, the wife of the learned gentleman, Hamza Fâkih (3.14b), and Dilber bint Abdullah made a loan of 400 *akçe* to Yusuf bin Abdullah and took him to court when he denied it (6.27b). Hadice bint Hızır borrowed 500 *akçe* from Hasan bin Evhad (3.14a), and in a series of investments, Gümüş bint Abdullah in partnership with Hamza bin Abdullah loaned Hızır bin Mehmed the considerable sum of 2,000 *akçe* (3.16b). In transactions further representative of the interaction of the market, the Muslim woman Ayşe bint Sinan borrowed 1,200 *akçe* at ten percent interest from her co-religionist Hacı Ali bin Mustafa (3.56b); Hiristiniye bint Todori, an obvious Christian by name, borrowed 1,000 *akçe* at 10 percent interest from the Muslim, Emir bin Mustafa (3.71a); and the Greek woman Manula bint Mihail was involved in a dispute regarding a loan claimed to have been given to her by a Jewish physician from İstanbul, Hâkim Sinan Yahudi (3.3a).

The give-and-take of the market can also be seen in the following three property cases, which involve women and men of different religions and the same agent in different roles. In them, we find that while a Muslim woman had given loans to two non-Muslim men, her husband and agent was in debt to a non-Muslim woman. At the end of April 1528, Canhabibe bint Abdullah, a resident of Çenkelköy, was represented by her husband and agent İskender bin Abdullah against the *zimmi* Andreyus from the same village who owed her 500 *akçe* (6.40b). In May of the following year, Canhabibe again sent her husband and agent to court, this time against the Greek Estani bin Dimitri for a loan of an unspecified amount. Estani admitted his debt and, apparently unable to pay, agreed to relinquish a market garden located near the dervish lodge [*zaviyye*] of İbrahim (6.76b). Immediately before this transaction, the Greek woman Manula bint Nikola appeared in court with İskender who also served as the agent for Çavuş Heyreddin Beğ, a local functionary. İskender,



it seems, was in debt to Manula for 1,000 *akçe* for a loan with interest and gave his market garden as surety (6.88b).

Bearing in mind that a modest residence could be purchased for 500 *akçe*, the amounts borrowed were not insignificant. The acquisition and disposal of real property figured strongly at the center of these loan transactions and, rather than gold or moveable property, real property appeared to be an investment of choice. Indeed, it was not uncommon for women to own the house in which a family lived, or such auxiliary buildings as sheds, barns, and hayricks. According to the Ḥanafī school of law applied throughout the Ottoman Empire, property which women acquired, regardless of source—inheritance, dowry, industry, or investment—was inviolable.<sup>23</sup> In addition to the family residence, much of the income of women was placed in hearth-based investments from which they could gain profit. The value placed on the proprietorship of real property even by poor women is apparent in the estate of Sara who died in Üsküdar in April 1529: her meager estate of 506 *akçe* included a frame shed evaluated at approximately half her estate (6.78a).

In addition to houses, women bought market gardens and orchards, and their estates often indicate the produce harvested from these. It is true that women came into possession of orchards and gardens through inheritance, usually through their husbands or fathers. This occurred most often when the family residence was assigned to the oldest son of the family, but it was also a factor of the relative value of houses to orchards being usually in proportion to the male-to-female ratio for inheritance division. The records of property transfer discussed below, however, indicate that women also purchased orchards and gardens of their own accord. Women also owned livestock on which a family depended. Nasıra Hatun, the daughter of Davud, from the rural village of Reislü purchased a water-buffalo at 520 *akçe* from Nebi bin Davud, probably her brother, who brought her to court to register the debt (6.127a). The village woman Ayşe bint Mursel personally appeared in the town court to pronounce that, since her water-buffalo had been devoured by a wolf, she was not responsible for the remainder she owed on the credit purchase (3.12a). Many women owned chickens and sheep, either for domestic consumption or to sell excess production for the local market. In addition to the clothing, the small quantity of gold, and household textiles that characterized the modest estate of Nefise bint Suleiman, for example, were two donkeys and five chickens (6.150a).

Dernschwam also noted in his journal, that in addition to the sequestration of Muslim women, Ottoman women in general did not have the same degree of freedom of movement enjoyed by their counterparts in Europe. In particular, when they traveled, they were escorted by their husbands (or male relatives) and rather than stay in caravanserais which harbored all types of low-life, they stayed in special guest houses in the towns. In an interesting example of cultural relativism, Dernschwam also noted that while these women may have been restricted with regard to with whom they could come in contact when they travelled, they rode freely in the style practiced by men. This was in direct contrast to their proper European counterparts who could fraternize freely but were restricted to riding in the lady-like style of side-saddle. These observations are partly confirmed by the estate of Selime bint Kemal, the wife of a military officer, who died while traveling through Üsküdar, which revealed that she was escorted by her son, mother, and female slave, while the estate of Behiye bint Davud, who died in a guest-house in Bulgurlu, included an expensive saddle alongside her prayer rug, prayer beads, and fine clothing (3.41a).

Although we cannot confirm their riding styles, we can attest that women, like their male counterparts in the town, did stay in guest houses and that several died there, as in the cases cited above. But the records also suggest that women were present in the market place, and that indeed some may have resided in those unsavory quarters. If women skirted the bustling commercial sector of Üsküdar, we learn from their records that they were renting commercial properties there. Şah-huban, for example, came to court with the claim that for 140 *akçe* she had rented the Bozahane, part of the well-known *vakıf* of the Mehmed Paşa *imaret*, site of the bath-house theft. The transaction was confirmed by the overseer of the property, Kara Mustafa, and Karaca, the butcher, provided surety for Şah-huban (6.138a). Saruca bint Etcî Mehmed rented rooms in the Sultan Mehmed Han Caravanserai in the commercial district where she lived with her husband, the foreign merchant [*acemi*] Baghdadi Mercan. Moreover, she wanted the court to know that she paid the 300 *akçe* rent (6.69b).

In addition to renting commercial spaces, as seen above, women also owned and inherited shops. In an inheritance dispute, Devlet bint Abdullah asserted her option by law [*hiyar*] over Sunduk bin

Abdullah for the shop and house that had belonged to his deceased brother (3.81a). Fatima bint Mustafa, one of the more prosperous residents of the town, had inherited a shop from her father. Although we do not know if she carried on his work or hired a manager, there is evidence in other entries that, in addition to production for domestic consumption, women engaged in home-based businesses, some of which they may have inherited. İnanpaşa bint Kökcü, for example, was the daughter of a herbalist (3.39b), and her own estate was rich with the tools of the trade, which suggests that she, too, was a herbalist. In addition, she owned both real property and livestock: 35 head of sheep, 2 calves, 8 hens, and a shed and a small garden.

Women did not confine their investments to the immediate neighborhood, as evidenced by Benefşe bint Abdullah from Konstantiniyye (İstanbul). Benefşe personally appeared in court against Mustafa bin Ramazan to whom she had given a loan with interest for 500 *akçe* (6.19a). In the reverse direction, Fatima bint Murad, a resident of Alt Boğca quarter of İstanbul, had made a purchase agreement with the Üsküdar resident Yazid bin Yunus for 1,100 *akçe* at market price (6.126b). In the following case, a house sale took place between two women who lived on opposite shores of the Bosphorus: according to İsa bin Halil, her agent, the Jewish woman, Sultana Hatun bint Yakub Kethuda, a resident of the European enclave of Galata on the European shore, had sold Fatima bint Yağcı Amca of Üsküdar the house in which she currently lived for 2,000 *akçe* (6.63b). They had a rental-purchase payment agreement whereby Fatima paid 240 *akçe* per annum for the house and its orchard until the full sum was paid. In October 1528, Sultana demanded the amount, and Fatima replied that she had given it to the agent. The agent, in turn, requested that financial surety be given for Fatima, and Kılavuz bin Aslıhan, one of the local functionaries, obliged, but to no avail: a year later, Sultana's agent appeared in court again with the same complaint against Fatima, who agreed to pay (6.112b).

As noted in the case of Sultana and Fatima, among others, the sale of real property between women was not uncommon. In another case, we find the transfer of property from mother to daughter. Ayşe Hatun bint Mustafa from Gece quarter appeared personally in court to pronounce: "I am a resident of that quarter, and there I have a house, a two-storied building with its walled surroundings, a

frame house with a tile roof." She added that recently she had sold it to her daughter Safiye bint İbrahim for 3,000 *akçe* (6.154a). Similarly, Gülbahar bint Abdullah registered that Surur bint Abdullah had purchased her house on an eight-month loan (3.46b).

Large amounts, not just egg money, were often involved in these transactions, and women were often involved in multiple transactions. Devlet bint Abdullah from the village of Çengelköy brought Emir bin Husnü to court stating that she had purchased a property from him for 800 *akçe* near the *mescid* (6.137a). She had taken possession of the orchard, but also laid claim to a house. Her declaration was confirmed after investigation. She then continued in her claims against Emir. Apparently he owed her 6,000 *akçe* of which 4,000 *akçe* plus expenses were still outstanding.

As we would expect, property and financial transactions between husband and wife were not unusual, and in the following example we see that investments and property changed hands between them in a variety of ways. When Dimitri bin Yani from Çengelköy was unable to repay the 1,000 *akçe* loan that his wife Sultana bint Butrus had made to him, she appeared in court first to register the complaint and then to acknowledge that she had accepted a house and land of described boundaries as a substitute (6.110b). When Nasıra bint Davud died, her husband made a claim against her estate for 850 *akçe* of goods she had bought from him. Among her belongings was a chain valued at 50 *akçe*, which he took as part of the payment, plus 80 *akçe* in gold. The remaining 620 *akçe*, he advocated, should come from the sale of the frame house she owned (6.11a). Gülbahar bint Abdullah and her husband Ahmed bin Abdullah appeared to be in the midst of an unsatisfactory property transfer whereupon she took him to court. She claimed that she owned a house in Mehmed Fakih quarter and that it bordered on the house of the Saruhanlu. "This is my property," she asserted. Her husband had been delinquent in paying expenditures for the house, a total of 300 *akçe*, and upon further enquiry he agreed to hand over the money (6.9a).

#### ESTATE RECORDS: EVIDENCE OF LIFESTYLE

The records of disputes and legal claims serve as an expression of individual transactions in which women engaged with other members of the community. By contrast, estate records have an additional advantage: they usually capture many transactions in

which an individual was engaged at one particular point in life, that is, the time of death. Items listed among the estates of women therefore indicate not only their possessions but also the range of social relations in which they participated. Their estates also provide insight into lifestyle. The estates of several women contained bath bowls, wraps, and bath-shirts for their weekly visit to the public baths, as mentioned by Dernschwam. The modest estate of Tenrebile bint Avraham, for example, is representative of women from the farming villages of the area. Tenrebile lived in Bulgurlu, in the pastoral hills overlooking the town of Üsküdar, where she died in early October 1527 (6.6b). She was either divorced or widowed (her modest estate of 3,235 *akçe* was inherited by her mother, two daughters, and some collateral relatives) and she owned a small, well-furnished frame house of moderate value with its surrounds and a frame shed. She was also involved in farming; she owned a black water-buffalo, four hens, a productive orchard, and approximately 125 kg. (5 kile) of wheat, and although she herself may not have actively farmed the land, she may have hired day labor. Moreover she had two loans forthcoming, for 100 *akçe* and 260 *akçe*, from outstanding payments due to her. Similarly, the estate of İslah bint Paşayığıd from Gece quarter included two loans she had made to her husband for a total of 1,500 *akçe*, an amount separate from the 200 *akçe* still outstanding from her dowry (6.7b).

Of equal interest was the estate of Paşabēği bint Hoşkadem, the manumitted slave of İsa bin Yusuf, which showed that she enjoyed a high level of economic independence (3.25b). Unmarried, she owned a small, well-stocked house in the rural village of Bulgurlu, livestock, and an orchard. She also held several small credit relations with men from the village who were not related to her.<sup>24</sup> Most importantly, similar to many women who sought to control the distribution of their estates, she had willed the maximum amount of the one-third permitted by law, and thus had denied her heir-by-derived-relationship [*asaba-i sebebiye*], her former master, of that amount of her estate. Although these bequests could be made to the local mosque, as with the aforementioned Fatima bint Ahmed, they were often used to assure the continued support of minor or favored children.<sup>25</sup>

In general, the estates of women are easily discernible from those of male residents of the area. In most cases, a larger proportion of

textiles and other household furnishings and implements distinguished estates of women, and among these were the famed and highly valued embroideries in which Ottoman women engaged in their leisure time and to which undoubtedly Dernschwam referred as their major activity. Turkish handi-work and embroideries were famed throughout the Mediterranean, and the high market values assigned by the estate evaluators attest to their aesthetic as well as commercial appeal.<sup>26</sup> Even the poorest women appear to have engaged in this pastime. An example of this is seen in the estate of the manumitted female slave Fatima Hatun bint Abdullah, who died in the house of Hoca Mehmed bin Salih in March 1530 and whose estate was inherited by Mehmed's wife, her former mistress, Fatima bint Yunus (6.127a). Fatima's meager estate was evaluated at a total of 354 *akçe* and consisted of old clothing of little value, but also more expensive bed coverings, an embroidered velvet cushion cover, an old hand-worked waist sash valued at slightly less than half of her estate, and quantities of flax thread.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction, the clothing of Ottoman women, regardless of religion or socio-economic level, was noticeably colorful. In addition to fine white gauze, their head- and face-coverings came in a range of vivid colors—orange, scarlet, crimson, yellow, and green—of which a woman, Muslim or non-Muslim, often owned several combinations. These could be made from printed cloth [*basma*] or hand-worked [*musanna*]. Although other basic clothing consisted of a gown and sash, often of bright blue woolen cloth, women of modest means also owned robes made from intricate silk brocades, while others were striped, or described as "Firengi" (as in the estate of İslah bint Paşayığıd from Gece quarter, 6.7b). Even footwear came in a variety of styles and vivid hues.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the possessions listed in their estates indicate that few women owned body-covering cloaks as identified by Dernschwam for covering themselves while in public. The few cloaks recorded belonged to women who belonged to the upper socio-economic level or whose estates indicated that they had religious commitments. For example, the *yaşmak*, or cloak, belonging to Selime bint Kemal (3.36a) was valued at 300 *akçe*, an amount comparable to a simple house or orchard.

As with their male counterparts, articles of faith were rare among the estates of women: the manumitted slave Paşabeği bint Hoşkadem

(3.25b) owned a prayer rug [*namazliĝ*], as did Behiye bint Davud, who also owned a set of prayer beads (3.41a). Based on the evidence of her religious inclinations, one might expect to find the remainder of Behiye's possessions to be sober. Instead, we find that she owned yellow or blue gowns, striped robes, and two fur garments, one white, the other worn. And although she did own a cloak, it, too, was striped. Among her travelling kit (it appeared she died while lodging), were a saddle, a reasonable amount of money, candles, and a small quantity of pickles. Jewelry, both gold and silver, was owned by several women but did not appear to be an indicator of wealth as, often, real property and even individual items of clothing, were of higher value than the miscellaneous earrings, chains, and bracelets listed in their estates.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In contrast to the image of Ottoman women in sixteenth-century İstanbul presented by Dernschwam, the court records of the area show these women to have been far from idle. Behind the walls that sequestered women of status or that enclosed the traditional houses of Ottoman villages and towns, women were vitally engaged in the social and economic transactions of the community. Unknown to the European observer, many actually owned the walls and the property within and were in the process of acquiring or exchanging yet others. Whereas veils and cloaks may have preserved the wearers from unwanted male attention, they did not prevent the women behind them from engaging in sizeable loan transactions or investing in trade partnerships with men who were neither related to them nor co-religionists. In short, the mosque and the public baths were only part of their social and economic network.

In addition to the mosque and the bath house, we can also add the market place and the law courts as public interfaces of women. The range of cases in which women appeared and which they initiated also indicates their everyday concerns. Of primary importance was the protection of their investments and their financial resources, especially those gained through inheritance, as these also affected the well-being of the family itself. Although women frequented the courts far less than men, their reasons for doing so provide rich insight into their activities. Like their male counterparts, they were often represented by an agent, but just as

often appeared in person. As adjunct to the community, the courts were used by women, on one hand, to settle a dispute over the laundry and, on the other, to settle the murder of a daughter, to defend themselves against accusations of adultery, and to bring charges against those who would impede their free passage through the streets of the town. Through them, we learn that women rented rooms in the local caravanserai, made loans to women who lived on the other side of the Bosphorus, and bought and sold livestock. As records of community life, the court registers indicate that the divisions between status and religion were not as well-defined as Dernschwam and others had noted. Non-Muslim women used the *sharī'a* courts for concerns shared by Muslim women and, indeed, by the community at large. A woman lodging in a charity house could use the court to charge another woman with theft, just as the mother of a local notable could register the loan with interest she had given to the daughter of a Greek baker while taking the woman's vegetable garden as security.

Women's household possessions clearly attest to their domestic productivity. The presence of embroidered cushions indicates one way in which women spent their leisure, but it is likely from the presence of shovels, spun thread, flour sieves, and hand mills in their estates that they had little time for idleness. That is, listed alongside the vivid headscarves, gold, rugs, and copper pots, it was also not uncommon to find the water-buffalos, hens, garden produce, orchard, and the trail of small—or not so small—loans given and taken. Moreover, the level of economic activity engaged in by women from lower socio-economic households indicates both that they had access to the street and that the market also came to their door. Unlike their equally active but higher status sisters, they were neither veiled nor sequestered, yet the very ordinariness of their presence rendered them invisible.

#### NOTES

1. Hans Dernschwam, *Istanbul ve Anadolu u'ya Seyahat Günlüğü*, trans. Yaşar Önen (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1987), p. 59. Despite the above mentioned shortcomings, Dernschwam remains one of the most astute observers of Ottoman ethnography in the sixteenth century.

2. He noted, however, that only old ladies went to the mosque, where they prayed in separate quarters. Younger women prayed at home.

3. Dernschwam, *Istanbul*, pp. 179–80.



4. Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, trans. Charles Thornton Forster and F.H. Blackburne Daniell, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), vol. 1, p. 117.

5. Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters*, vol. 1, p. 118.

6. Dernschwam, *Istanbul*, p. 78. This leap of the imagination and information was also common among nineteenth-century Orientalist painters.

7. The earliest series of law court registers for the city of İstanbul is that of the legal district of Üsküdar, situated on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus and overlooking the imperial city. Two volumes of these registers form the basis for the observations presented here: the third and sixth in the series. The first volume used covers from 1520 to 1524, and coincides with the accession of Sultan Sulaymān, whereas the latter covers from 1527 to 1530. Each volume contains approximately one thousand entries. For further background, see the author's "The Üsküdar Estates (Tereke) as Records of Everyday Life in an Ottoman Town, 1520–1524," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1991.

8. The estates recorded in the register were determined as representative of the general population of the district. This tension is also noted by Jennings in discussing the town of Kayseri in seventeenth-century Anatolia: the willingness with which apparent adulteresses were restored by their husbands to their households suggested that the socio-economic role of women in Kayseri society "was more important than sexual virginity and chastity," two characteristics again highly valued by Muslims. Ronald Jennings, "Women in Early 17th Century Ottoman Kayseri," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 96.

9. These registers are housed in Başbakanlık Archives and referred to in the first volume of İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı, *Âbideleri ve Kitabeleriyle Üsküdar Tarihi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Yeşilay Cemiyeti Yayınevi, 1976) vol. 1, pp. 46–47. Based on the content of the *shari'a* court registers, which refer to other foundations not included in this register, the list is incomplete.

10. Konyalı, *Âbideleri*, vol. 1, pp. 49–51.

11. Konyalı, *Âbideleri*, vol. 1, p. 235.

12. The subject of use of the law courts is addressed in the author's "Standing at the Gates of Justice: Women in the Law Courts of Early Sixteenth-Century İstanbul," in *Contested States: Law, Hegemony and Resistance*, eds. Mindie Lazarus-Black and Susan F. Hirsch (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 184–206.

13. Although no cases of male prostitution or adultery were recorded in these particular registers, there were several cases of public drunkenness, theft (again, in the bath-house), and burglary.

14. In the first volume (1520–24), women initiated 9 percent of cases and appeared as defendants in 6 percent during a forty-month period.

15. Selime, the second of two wives in the polygynous marriage of Hızır the Courier gave up the rights of support for her underage child in

order to remarry four months after her husband's death (3.9b). Prior to this, her claims for her outstanding dowry and support had been contested and denied by her husband's oldest son by his first marriage and by her husband's first wife.

16. Persons engaged in menial occupations received a subsistence allowance of 2 *akçe* per day at this time. This amount was also assigned for the upkeep of incarcerated slaves, stray livestock, and as the daily allowance of divorced women during their three-month waiting period. In Bursa at the end of the fifteenth century, the living expenses for a female slave were estimated at 40 *akçe* per month. Halil İnalçık, "Servile Labor in the Ottoman Empire," *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds*, ed. Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kuhn, and Bela K. Kiraly (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), p. 44.

17. Although no further matters were entered, for example, Kapabaşa bint Mehmed had it recorded in early June 1529 that an agent has been established for her (6.123a). In other cases, agents were established and witnessed in the introduction before they could begin to serve in that capacity.

18. See, N.J. Pantazopoulos, "Church and Law in the Balkan Peninsula During the Ottoman Rule," *Journal of The Institute for Balkan Studies* 92 (1967): 90.

19. In eighty-nine estate records recorded in volume three, only two polygynous unions were recorded. See also, the above mentioned case of Hızır the Courier and the rapid remarriage of his second wife.

20. In his study of seventeenth-century Bursa, Gerber shows that judges may have carried out the letter of the law in settling legally determined inheritance shares upon female members of a family, but this ideal was often in conflict with the reality that appears in the registers where "other means" contrived to deprive women of their shares. Haim Gerber, "Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12 (1980): 232. This was also the case in Kayseri, where, although shares were canonically regulated, women resorted to the court to force payment. Jennings, pp. 69-70.

21. Gerber provides examples of women involved in credit relations in Bursa, for example. Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1988), pp. 144-45. Further afield in Ottoman Cyprus in the sixteenth century, in "matters of accumulating, managing, and claiming property women showed real vigor" (Ronald Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World, 1571-1640* [New York: New York University Press, 1993], p. 22). Gerber noted that, to some extent, women in seventeenth-century Bursa were engaged in independent artisanship. Some women were engaged as dyers, for example. Whereas some were employed by guilds or participated in cottage industry production, particularly bleaching and

spinning silk, others worked independently, producing items on a small scale in their own homes to be sold either in the streets or in the markets. Gerber, "Bursa Women," 237-38; also "Economy and Society," 63.

22. In a *mudaraba* partnership involving sea trade, individuals could invest in a voyage by a loan to the captain at twenty-five percent interest, a rate higher than usual in order to cover the risk due to loss of cargo at sea. Haim Gerber, "The Muslim Law of Partnership in Ottoman Court Records," *Studica Islamica* 53 (1981): 114; see also, Suraiya Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 93.

23. Jennings stressed that the inviolability of women's property holdings was consistently upheld by the Kayseri court. See "Kayseri Women," 65-66.

24. In the case of Paşabeği, a woman of slave origin, she would normally not have blood relatives (or canonically related men) in the region. This does not apply to those women who were neither of slave origin nor converts. In the case of the latter, loss of the original patronym prevents the possible tracking of family relationships. For further information on female slaves and Paşbeği's estate, see the author's "Fugitives and Factotums: Slaves in Early Sixteenth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 39 (1996): 147-52.

25. Jennings, "Kayseri Women," 71.

26. Walter Denny, "Textiles," in *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982), pp. 132-33 and 121-68.

27. Other examples of the high value placed upon embroidered and hand-worked textiles include 3.38b, 3.39a, 3.132a, 6.8b.

28. See Yvonne J. Seng, "The Market for Domestic and Imported Textiles in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul," in *Textiles in Trade* (Washington, D.C.: Proceedings of the Textile Society of America Biennial Symposium, 1990), pp. 149-57.

“SHE IS TROUBLE...  
AND I WILL DIVORCE HER”:  
ORALITY, HONOR, AND REPRESENTATION  
IN THE OTTOMAN COURT OF ‘AINTAB<sup>1</sup>

*Leslie Peirce*

*Gendered structures of divorce in a sixteenth-century Ottoman provincial court are studied through analysis of how the court's written record reconstructs litigants' oral testimony.*

“Let him give me one gold piece and a divorce” said Sultan, daughter of Musa, as she sued for release from her marriage in the presence of the judge of ‘Aintab on 20 September 1540. In August 1541, the peasant Tanrıvirdi, requesting divorce from his wife İne, told the court, “İne here is my wife. She has no pleasure in life living together with me. I gave her a cow worth 1,000 *akçes*, let her give it back to me and I’ll give her a divorce...” Sultan and Tanrıvirdi were among the several dozen women and men seeking divorce whose words were recorded in the court registers of the Ottoman provincial capital of ‘Aintab (today’s Gaziantep) between September 1540 and September 1541 (Cemaziülevvel 947 to Cemaziülahır 948).<sup>2</sup> This essay explores the significance of oral discourse in the court of ‘Aintab and the transformation of the oral to the written. I am interested in how words spoken by individuals like Sultan and Tanrıvirdi in cases of divorce were represented in the written record of the court proceedings.

In these divorce records, there is a striking variation in the manner in which the litigants’ statements were quoted, that is, in the nature of the language that recorded the testimony of litigants and witnesses. In certain cases, testimony is recorded in a kind of standard format: incidental details of the speaker’s narrative are omitted, and

idiosyncrasies of speech and expression are flattened into formulaic utterances. Other cases, however, stand out for the vivid detail and seemingly individual idiom in which testimony is recorded. Why should this be so? In this essay, I will argue that the manner in which oral testimony was shaped for the written record was controlled not only by the requirements of legal procedure but also by the broader goal of preserving individual and communal well-being. The personnel, the legal dynamics, and the communal locale of the court endowed it with a unique language, one that of necessity mediated between the needs of the law on the one hand and the needs of the court's users on the other.

#### THE ORAL, THE MORAL, AND THE TEXT

That questions of orality and the process of transformation of the oral to the written should be crucial in reading the records of a pre-modern Muslim court hardly needs stating. Legal procedure in the Muslim court privileged the oral. To be sure, it would be an exaggeration to say that written instruments did not figure in the proceedings of the 'Aintab court; numerous cases presided over by the *kadı*, or judge, in 1540–41 required that litigants produce a document—title to a piece of land, for example, or a certificate of manumission. Moreover, the record of a case tried previously at the court might be consulted for its relevance to the present case. Nevertheless, the verbal testimony of individuals was the principal stuff of the court's daily operation.

While litigants in the 'Aintab court could be represented by proxy [*vekil*], they most often pleaded their suits themselves (or so the court records suggest). To support his or her suit, a plaintiff called on witnesses who presented oral testimony based on eye-witness knowledge. This testimony is invariably represented in the written record as direct speech. Similarly, the many *ikrars*—voluntary statements of acknowledgment or obligation—recorded before the judge of 'Aintab are represented as direct speech.<sup>3</sup> This apparent reluctance of the court to tamper with the integrity of a speech act by rephrasing it into reported speech suggests that the court found it important to honor the act of testifying as well as the factual content of the testimony. Further salience of the oral can be seen in the crucial role in the court played by oaths, which not infrequently determined the resolution of a case. When, for example, the plaintiff

could not produce evidence to support the claim against the defendant, the plaintiff directed the judge to administer an oath [*yemin billah*] to the defendant, who swore on the Qur'ān (or Bible if the defendant were Christian) the truth of his or her own testimony; in such a case, judgment was made in favor of the defendant on the strength of the oath alone.<sup>4</sup> At issue then is a legal procedure that not only privileged the oral but also assimilated the speaker's moral integrity, indeed his or her relationship to God, to words spoken in court. In one of the rare instances when an 'Aintab neighborhood acted on the right of a city quarter or a village to evict an undesirable resident, it was the individual's appearance as a witness in court that precipitated the eviction: according to the court record, "the neighborhood united, came to court, and complained, 'We distrust both [this man's] actions and his words.' It was ruled that he be evicted from the neighborhood."<sup>5</sup> The court, then, was closely connected to the moral life of the 'Aintab community. Whether it served the moral integrity of women and men equally is another question.

Legal procedure was only one manifestation of the broad cultural importance of the oral for the integrity of the individual as well as of the community. Verbal statements played a crucial role in establishing and enacting ethical codes. The relationship between the oral and the moral character of the speaker is immediately evident to every student of Islamic culture. It begins with the Qur'ān, whose literal meaning is 'recitation': Muḥammad, the perfect Muslim, was instructed by the angel Gabriel to recite God's revelations for the benefit of the community; only after the Prophet's death was God's message organized into a written text. The *ḥadīth*, the orally transmitted reports of the Prophet's own actions and words as well as actions and words of which he approved, formed an essential basis for the development of the law, ethical literature, and even history. This oral tradition at the heart of Islamic society linked the oral, the moral character of the individual, and the well-being of the community: the validity of a *ḥadīth*, hence the socio-legal regulations founded upon it, was dependent upon the moral reputation of each human link in its chain of transmitters, its *isnad* or 'prop.'

Embedded in the Turkish language is recognition of the cultural fact that to transmit experience of a social event through speech is to ally oneself to it as witness and thereby to assume a responsibility for the construction of the event's communal significance: there are

two tenses in Turkish for reporting events that have occurred, one connoting eye-witness experience of the event and one connoting only hearsay knowledge. Oral testimony in the 'Aintab court registers is always recorded in the first of these tenses; the second occurs only in the statements of police agents bringing offenders on the basis of the allegations of informants.

But the court record is not a transparent text. It cannot be read as a complete and faithful account of what went on at court, nor can the speech recorded in the register be assumed to be a verbatim account of what people said. Too often, scholars writing social and economic history on the basis of court records surviving from the Ottoman period do not take this aspect of their source into account as they weigh 'data' gleaned from the records. Rather than a reflection of 'reality,' the written record is a constructed representation after the fact, recomposing events and acts of speech. This does not mean that court records lack deliberate structure or procedural standards; variations in language exist within some fairly standardized formats. But they are persistent enough to suggest that the records must be problematized as text before one can exploit them for data. Asking questions about the very existence of such variation, particularly with respect to the representation of oral testimony, can in fact become a productive methodological line of inquiry.

One obvious characteristic of the constructed nature of the court record is that it is a summary. In the 'Aintab registers of the mid-sixteenth century, the individual record of each case was typically spare. The average number of cases recorded on one side of register folios, which measure approximately 10 by 30 cm., is slightly more than three. (However, a particularly complex case might be recorded in the register as two or more entries, or *sijills*, each focusing on a separate claim or issue stemming from the case.) The few entries in the registers which fill one side of a folio or more tend to be verbatim copies of written decrees from the regional governor [*beglerbeg*] in Mar'as or the sultan.

Each case is recorded as if it had taken place within a unity of time, as if the problem at issue had been resolved in a single session of the court. Yet closer examination suggests that in the 'Aintab registers cases were sometimes recorded in a stylized manner which collapsed the time frame of the proceedings.<sup>6</sup> A record which presents a case as if resolved in a single court session might be an apocopated or collapsed narrative of proceedings which had been drawn out over more than one session of the court and/or which had included interim measures such as the

dispatching of agents to seek additional evidence or to examine physical evidence unable to be transported to the court. The passage of time, then, was not an element whose representation in the court record was deemed vital. Considerable verbal interaction might be omitted from the written record, which included only that testimony necessary for a satisfactory resolution of the case.

Movement from the oral to the written was not then along a direct one-way road. What implications does this observation have for our concern here, namely, the variation in written representations of speech at court? A formulaic recording of court testimony in which individual idiosyncracies of speech are translated into an appropriate legalese recomposes the original act of speech, stripping it of its individuality. But is the converse a safe assumption, namely, that the more idiosyncratic, idiomatic statements in the court record are closer to what the litigant or witness 'actually said'? Faced with the task of creating a seamless narrative from the statements of litigants who may have found themselves less than articulate in the presence of the court, might the author of the record have composed, or partially composed, what, if read transparently, might be assumed to be a literal utterance of the litigant? In other words, to what degree did the written reconstruct the oral? In mid-sixteenth-century 'Aintab, it was the judge who shaped the compact narrative record from sometimes lengthy court proceedings, dictating his summary to a court scribe. The initial page of the court register dating from 29 Muḥarram 948, begun with the appointment of a new judge, announces that the *sijills* are 'composed' or 'inscribed' [*mektüb*] by the judge, Hüsameddin Efendi. While the most common lexical meaning of *mektüb* is 'written', it is unlikely that the records were actually penned by the judge; the use of *mektüb* here mostly likely connotes the composition of the authoritative, permanent representation of the case.<sup>7</sup>

The judge's principal job in authoring the written record was to summarize, that is, to extract and record the elements of the proceedings that were essential to satisfying the requirements of correct legal procedure. The written record of a case, shaped by these requirements, is consequently not a mirror of human events and emotions but rather a prism transforming separate streams of experience into a narrative focussed to satisfy a particular set of requirements. When an individual voice breaks out to inscribe itself in the court record, we must ask what



that public utterance accomplishes for its speaker and why the judge shows deference to the power of those particular words.

This essay explores questions of orality and representation by examining divorce cases settled by the 'Aintab court during the year September 1540 to September 1541. I have chosen to focus on divorce cases (some 30 cases out of approximately 1200 cases read) because of the complexity of the legal and legal-procedural issues in this commonplace social occurrence. Islamic law approved several forms of divorce, each of which required different forms of court action (and in some cases no court appearance at all) and different forms of testimony. The fact that only a subset of the various forms of divorce outlined in *sharī'a* manuals were represented at the 'Aintab court while customary practices lying outside the compass of *sharī'a* were acknowledged at court enables us to probe the question of what function the court played in this problematic area of social life. In addition, the male bias in the legal structure of Muslim divorce invites questions about women's ability to use the court to their advantage.

Before proceeding to analysis of the court cases, I would like to sound two cautions. The first is that strict categorization of any set of cases in the court record—in this instance, divorce cases—is to a certain extent an arbitrary exercise. Divorce cases are never simply about divorce: they involve culturally universal issues such as custody, child support, and in particular the control of property, as well as culturally specific linkages—in sixteenth century 'Aintab, to adultery and rape, severe illness, the absence of husbands, and the pervasive habit of swearing. Moreover, one risks misconstruing the representation at court of a particular issue, such as divorce, if one fails to situate the court's handling of that particular issue within the context of its broader legal culture and language.

The second caution is the obvious risk for a native speaker of English in the late twentieth century in attempting to evaluate the Turkish of Anatolian villagers and townspeople of the mid-sixteenth century. Such an exercise may introduce anachronistic criteria for assessing 'authentic' speech or for interpreting rhetorical or emotional nuances. Moreover, as noted above, grasping the intention behind the speaker's choice of words and his or her framing of the testimonial narrative is not the only challenge to the modern scholar: in translating lived events into a textual summary, the author of the written record has created an additional

barrier to a transparent reading of the recorded testimony as 'what the litigants said.' In an effort to correct both for the inevitable anachronisms of textual reading across centuries and cultures and for the impossibility of knowing exactly what considerations determined the written record, I shall examine cases with an eye to how they cluster: Does the representation of the oral correlate with the type of divorce? Are there differences in the representation of female and male voices? If so, what can such differences tell us about the practice of divorce on the one hand, and the meaning of the court to its users on the other?

#### 'AINTAB AND ITS COURT

The first page of the court register dating from 29 Muḥarrem 948/24 July 1540 bears the inscription, "the original record of the court of 'Aintab the well-protected." The city of 'Aintab was the administrative center of a small but prosperous province [*sançak*] of the same name located in the border area between southeastern Anatolia and northern Syria. In 1540, 'Aintab was in the process of integration into the Ottoman administrative system, having come under Ottoman rule in 1516 as one of the fruits of Selim I's conquest of the Mamlūk state. The city's ambiguous geographical identity is evident in the fact that the Ottoman administration first placed it under the jurisdiction of the provincial capital of Aleppo, in whose economic and social orbit 'Aintab continued to lie, but shortly thereafter transferred both city and subprovince to the province of Dulkadir, whose capital, Mar'āş, lay to the north. According to a 1543 tax census, the population of the city was approximately 10,000, and of the province as a whole 36,000.<sup>8</sup> In the context of Anatolia, 'Aintab was a medium-sized city, somewhat smaller than old established Anatolian urban centers such as Bursa and Kayseri.<sup>9</sup> The province's principal sources of income were agriculture, artisanal guild-based manufacturing, and trade, with pastoral nomadism playing a not insignificant but lesser role than it did in neighboring provinces. In terms of its human geography, 'Aintab, with its predominantly Turkish-speaking population, appears in this period to have been more homogeneous than other provinces in the area.<sup>10</sup> The non-Muslim population of the province was quite small, in contrast to religiously more heterogeneous provinces to the east: there was a single Armenian quarter in the city (out of 34 quarters) and only one village (again, Armenian) from which the poll-tax on 60 non-Muslim households was collected.<sup>11</sup> 'Aintab was a city rich in religious and

educational endowments: a 1550 survey of pious foundations [*vakıf*] counted eleven congregational mosques, fifty-nine small neighborhood mosques, six religious colleges [*medrese*], and eight dervish hostels [*zaviye*].<sup>12</sup>

Because of its location in a border region, 'Aintab frequently found itself playing the role of political buffer zone, traded back and forth among the major powers in the region. Its prosperity in 1540, when it had recently emerged from a three-way battle among the Mamlüks, Dulkadir Turkomans, and Ottomans, suggests that the contest for control of southeastern Anatolia had not seriously damaged the fabric of local life. Not only were the people of 'Aintab "well protected" by a strong fortress, but the contest over this area in the late medieval period tended to be won and lost in pitched battles rather than lengthy, and thus destructive, border campaigns. Indeed, in the Near East these were the last years when huge territories might fall as the result of single battles or campaigns. The city's demographic homogeneity was no doubt an additional factor in its relative well-being. It also seems likely that the court of 'Aintab acted as a major force in the preservation of local order within an environment of political turbulence. The great variety of problems brought to the judge in 1540–41 suggests that the court formed a principal arena for mediation of economic and social relations as well as relations between town and village. The orderly nature of the 'Aintab court registers—in contrast to the more haphazard nature of the registers of some other Anatolian cities in this period (such as those of Manisa)—suggests that in 1540–41 the court was operating according to well-established procedures.<sup>13</sup>

If the 'Aintab court mediated disputes among residents within its jurisdiction, the written record of each case mediated the contending voices of litigants and witnesses. What were the forces that gave rise to the requirements of legal procedure? It is important to understand the complex of interests operating at the 'Aintab court since it is this that guided the judge in shaping the official record, more specifically in deciding how to represent verbal testimony whose recording was procedurally necessary.

The most obvious force shaping legal procedure was Islamic legal tradition, which functioned in the court of 'Aintab as the matrix for the decision-making process. The majority of cases that came to the 'Aintab judge appear to have followed the *shari'a* in terms of legal prescriptions, legal terminology, and court procedure.<sup>14</sup> But

what was *sharī'a* for the inhabitants of 'Aintab and the judge assigned to the city at the mid-sixteenth century? It was in part a received tradition in which the judge as well as many citizens of 'Aintab were educated. The city's six religious colleges presumably fostered a resident community of teachers and students studying Islamic legal tradition, and supplied them with libraries containing the principal works of that tradition. *Sharī'a* was also a living tradition, shaped in part by the legal opinions [*fetva*] issued by the Ottoman chief mufti, a prominent legal scholar and practitioner whose reputation for legal expertise earned him appointment to this post by the sultan.<sup>15</sup> 'Aintab also had a locally recognized *mufti*, one Hasan Efendi, although it is not clear whether he held an appointed office or was instead a locally respected scholar whose opinions townspeople and villagers sought out for particular problems. Whatever the 'Aintab mufti's precise status, his presence provided a sanction for interpretation of *sharī'a* which, as we shall see, might counter rulings of the central *sharī'a* authority.

But the court was also an essential—perhaps the essential—element in the state administration of justice. The judge was appointed by the state: in the one-page summary account of the 1543 census/tax survey of the province of 'Aintab, he was listed in the inventory of personnel representing the central government (which included in addition the governor and the provincial cavalry).<sup>16</sup> The judge shared with the state-appointed local governor the responsibility for enforcing imperial, or state, legislation (here I am using the term 'state' as an Ottoman subject of the sixteenth century would have understood the term *devlet*—the dynasty and the governing classes dependent upon it).<sup>17</sup> Imperial legislation applicable to 'Aintab took the form of individual decrees [*firman*] which were inscribed in the court record and, more importantly, the law compendia issued by the sultan and central bureaucracies. These compendia, or *kanunnames*, were of two types: local codes for provincial administration tailored to the local economic and demographic base as well as to local needs and customs (the *kanunname* for 'Aintab was issued in 1536), and empire-wide codes for universal application, which underwent additions and modifications by succeeding sultans.<sup>18</sup>

The location of the court at the intersection of religious law and the state is underlined by the manner in which punishment was

decided. The structure of penalty-making in the 'Aintab court did not accord with strict *sharī'a* tradition, according to which the judge assigns penalties [*ta'zir*] using his discretionary judgment [*ra'y*], through which his knowledge of *sharī'a* is brought to bear on the issue at hand. While this tradition was reaffirmed in the *fetvas* of 16th-century chief muftis,<sup>19</sup> only a handful of cases that came to court in 1540–41 contained a *ta'zir* penalty set by the judge. Moreover, in only a minority of cases is the judge's ruling [*hüküm*] explicitly recorded, although often the structure of a case is sufficient to make the outcome clear. Where a penalty is to be imposed upon a guilty party, the court record rarely records the sentence. While we have no examples of sentences given outside the court, it is probable that they were decided with reference to the imperial *kanunname* issued by Sulaymān. This at least is what is ordered by the provincial *kanunname* for 'Aintab, set at the front of the first census/tax survey of the province conducted in 1536, and a copy of which was presumably filed with the judge. With reference to infractions of the law, the *kanunname* for 'Aintab states that

...Those who have incurred punishment by state authority [*siyasete müstahak olanlar*] shall be punished as they deserve according to their transgression. For every crime which occurs, no matter how great or small, [the penalty] shall be decided with reference to the Ottoman Law [*Kanun-ı Osmanî*]. Force shall not be used to exact anything more than that.<sup>20</sup>

The state was a distinct presence at court in the form not only of its laws but also of its provincial agents. The local governor, the local intendant of royal lands [*hass emini*], and their respective agents (*subaşı*) appeared in the 'Aintab court, principally to bring action in suits that fell within their arena of jurisdiction, but also as litigants in matters of personal concern. In addition, delegates of sultanic authority—those just named as well as officers of the fortress garrison—occasionally acted as witnesses to court proceedings.

If the court was charged with administration of both *sharī'a* and state law, there was a third contender in this local arena of justice: the community. The interests of the community were represented in a variety of ways. The community figured most explicitly and consistently through the witnesses who participated in each case, summoned by the litigants to testify on their behalf or to witness routine transactions such as purchase and sale or the appointment

of guardians. In addition, the community was automatically represented in each case through the *shuhud ul-hal*, the group of witnesses, usually three or four, who validated the correctness and completeness of each legal proceeding as a whole. In a different manner of influencing decisions at court, local residents who possessed professional expertise in a particular matter might be summoned to inform the judge of customary professional norms so that he might make a judicious ruling in a dispute whose grounds were unfamiliar to him. Community members might also play a role in court as arbitrators: in cases amenable to a negotiated settlement (*sulh*), the judge appointed a group of arbitrators of sound moral repute and acted on their recommendation. In cases where an individual's moral reputation was a relevant factor, neighbors might be canvassed for their opinion and the resultant consensus introduced into the court record as evidence. Indeed, the neighborhood as a body was invested with a kind of legal identity, in some cases charging individuals with creating disorder within its midst, in other cases itself held liable for harm done to individuals within its premises.

Where was the judge himself located in the decision-making process? The register of the court's activities rendered the judge's personal voice indistinguishable by recording his judgments in the passive: "it was ruled that..." [...*hükmolunub*]. Indeed, the word 'judge' [*kadi*] appears only a handful of times in the cases examined, always in reference to the actions of a former judge of Aintab or a judge from another district, so that if one knew nothing about the structure of the Ottoman legal system, one could not tell from the court records that there was in fact a judge presiding. Litigants, witnesses, arbitrators, delegates of the state's authority bringing cases to court—all these individuals are named and verbally present in the court record, but the judge, situated at the nexus of religion, state, and community and entrusted with the mediation of *sharī'a*, state law, and local custom, is, as an individual, nameless and textually silent. This impersonal representation of the judge's role reflects the recognition that it was the operation of the legal process as a whole rather than the directives of an individual that led to the outcome of a case.

#### DIVORCE IN ISLAMIC LEGAL THEORY

Within the framework of Islamic law, a complex set of means to accomplish divorce [*talāq*] was articulated. Most, however, contained the core provision that the dissolution of a marriage was initiated or

accomplished by the husband's unilateral pronouncement of a formula of divorce. To fully describe all forms of divorce in Islamic law and the details of their application is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>21</sup> Briefly and synoptically, the principal forms are the following. *Talāq-ı sünnet*, forms of divorce approved by the Prophet Muḥammad, have as their characteristic feature the revocability of the husband's unilateral pronouncement of divorce; he and his wife may resume their marriage as long as he acts to do so within a prescribed period of time. Such a divorce is 'approved' principally because it provides an opportunity for reconciliation, thus preserving the socially vital institution of marriage. Should a husband divorce his wife in this manner three times, however, the third such pronouncement of divorce is irrevocable, and the couple is unable to remarry unless the wife first marries (and is divorced from) another. The less favorable forms of divorce, *talāq-ı bid'at*—those disapproved by the Prophet yet still legally permissible—are irrevocable upon the husband's pronouncement of divorce. Such immediate divorce is accomplished either through three pronouncements of divorce at one time or a single pronouncement of irrevocable divorce (distinguished in the 'Aintab records as *talāq-ı selase* and *talāq-ı ba'in*).

What is notable for our purposes here is that these forms of unilateral divorce are initiated by the husband and accomplished simply by his verbal utterance. He is not required to cite a reason for the divorce. While aspects of the wife's status—her social rank, for example—might affect the settlement of divorce, she has no voice in the divorce process. Unilateral divorce is determined by an oral act of the husband, his intentions, and his state of mind and body when he speaks.

Divorce was the area of Muslim family law perhaps least favorable to women, and the Ḥanāfi school of law, adopted by most Turkish-ruled states including the Ottomans, was the most restrictive with respect to women's ability to sue for and obtain divorce. If women suffered in the area of divorce law, they gained however in other areas, particularly in their ability to control money and property. Divorce law protected one important source of material wealth, the dower [*mehr*]: both 'approved' and 'disapproved' forms of divorce require that the husband hand over to the wife at the time of the divorce whatever portion of her dower she has not previously received. In addition, the husband must provide financial support during a prescribed waiting-period after the divorce [*iddet*], whose purpose is to determine if the wife is pregnant.

For women who wished to take the initiative in ending their marriage, the form of divorce known as *khul'* was the principal mechanism that afforded them that option, although it required them to sacrifice the protection of their marital property. In this form of divorce, the husband agrees to his wife's request for divorce in return for her surrender of her material rights in the marriage—dower, support during the post-divorce waiting-period, and possibly household items she owns. While *khul'* in classical jurisprudence did not necessarily prescribe the surrender of the female's material rights in the marriage, Ibrahim al-Halabi, whose compendium of Ḥanāfi law composed in the early sixteenth century became the most widely used of legal references in the Ottoman empire,<sup>22</sup> insisted on the principle of divorce in return for material consideration in his explication of *khul'*.<sup>23</sup> Divorce by *khul'* operates as a single irrevocable divorce. Often glossed as 'mutual divorce,' *khul'* will be referred to here as divorce for material consideration, as that is its distinguishing characteristic in sixteenth-century Ottoman usage.

#### DIVORCE IN THE 'AINTAB COURT RECORDS

Such, very briefly, are the major forms of divorce as elaborated by legal theory. How was that theory reflected in practice in the court of 'Aintab? That the court record can give only a limited view of a particular social practice or problem is immediately obvious in the case of divorce. The 'Aintab court record in 1540–41 represents only a partial spectrum of the various forms of divorce described above. And so we begin our exploration of types of divorce and their representation at court with a null set. Those divorces accomplished by the husband's unilateral pronouncement of the divorce formula do not come to court. It is possible, even probable, that most divorces occurring among the residents of 'Aintab in this period were of this type.

The very absence of this major form of divorce tells something important about the role of the court. The problematic of the oral and its representation allows us to see why unilateral divorce did not come to court. As we shall see, what made recourse to the court necessary in cases of divorce was the need to establish a particular verbal statement as a matter of record. Divorce of the unilateral type required no such public certification or witness. All that was required for such a divorce was the husband's oral pronouncement. If the validity of the divorce were challenged—for example, that



the husband never made the pronouncement, or that he made it in a legally unacceptable manner—he had only to repeat it correctly. In other words, there was nothing to be gained by going to court.<sup>24</sup> Given the fact that Ottoman judges were authorized to exact fairly steep fees from petitioners at court, there was no doubt something to be gained by avoiding the court.<sup>25</sup>

Unilateral divorce did leave traces in the court record, however. Evidence of its practice can be found in suits by divorced women who encountered obstacles in recovering the dower due to them upon such a divorce. The villager Habibe, for example, sued her ex-husband Hızır Fakih for 104 *akçes* and a bracelet in addition to her dower, and received two gold florins (160 *akçes*) in an arbitrated settlement.<sup>26</sup> The city-dweller Sitti La'ış failed to recover her dower from Haji Nasir, her former husband, when two witnesses testified that she had previously made him a gift of it [*hibe*]; Sitti La'ış was able, however, to obtain the sum of two *akçes* a day as waiting-period support for herself and one *akçe* a day in support for her daughter, Saliha.<sup>27</sup>

When we turn to the divorces which were accomplished in the 'Aintab court, we see that for the most part there is a correlation between kind of divorce and the nature of recorded verbal testimony. The most frequently occurring cases were *khul'*, or divorce for material consideration; the record of this type of case was the most formulaic in nature. A second type of case, less frequently represented in the record, was divorce following an accusation of adultery against the wife; in these cases, oral representations were more varied and individual, yet inscribed in what appears to have been a set structure for dealing with such cases. A third set consisted of 'conditional divorces,' which stemmed from a husband's swearing an oath involving divorce of his wife ('if I do such-and-such, may my wife be divorced'); here, representation of verbal testimony seems most literal, appearing to record the litigant's actual words. Within each of these three clusters, there is consistency with regard to the privileging of either the husband's or the wife's testimony: in divorce for material consideration, the wife's statement is recorded as direct speech, preceding the husband's, which is reported indirectly, while the reverse is true for the other two clusters. But the caution sounded earlier—that strict classification may not always be a productive exercise—must be remembered here: some divorce cases do not fit neatly into one of these three classifications. Perhaps not surprisingly, the circumstances leading to divorce in these cases were rather vividly recounted. Such cases, existing on the margins of familiar categories,

may in fact reveal to us more deeply the drama of life in sixteenth-century 'Aintab.

'KHUL' DIVORCE, OR DIVORCE FOR MATERIAL CONSIDERATION

The type of divorce appearing most frequently at the 'Aintab court in 1540-41 was *khul'* divorce, in which the wife renounces her material rights in the marriage in exchange for release from it. The 'Aintab registers, however, do not use the legal term *khul'* (or any other classificational term) in cases whose constituent elements and procedural structure follow this form of divorce. There were nine divorces in the period I examined that can be grouped on the basis of their shared key feature: the wife's voluntary renunciation of her property rights in the marriage. (Three additional such cases dating from 945 and 946 H appear among the forty or so cases from these years bound into the first of the two registers I examined.) For the most part, the records of these cases follow the same straightforward procedure and tend to be void of detail. Wife and husband, or in some cases legal proxy for one or both, appear at court; the wife specifies what it is that she forfeits in compensation for release from the marriage; and the husband grants an irrevocable divorce (either a triple or a single irrevocable divorce). In addition, husband and wife each state that they have no further claim on the other. The following is an example of a routine *khul'* divorce:

Ahmed son of Halil, appointed proxy for the matter of divorce by Münir son of Abdullah, came to court; Ayşe daughter of Ümit the ironmonger, wife of the said Münir, was present together with him. The said Ayşe made the following statement: 'I forfeit the dower that is in Münir's possession and my waiting-period support, and I have no further claim or suit.' When she made this statement, the said Ahmed then, as proxy for the said Münir,<sup>28</sup> granted a divorce in the form of a triple divorce in exchange for the dower and waiting-period support. There remaining no claim or suit by either against the other, it was ruled that the case was terminated and the litigation ended and that separation should take place.<sup>29</sup>

What brought *khul'* divorces to court? It is not, as one might first suppose, the issue of property changing hands, for exchange of property took place in unilateral divorce as well, which in 'Aintab was accomplished outside the court. What brought *khul'* divorces to court—indeed, what necessitated their subjection to court procedure—was the requirement that the wife explicitly state her

agreement to forego her property rights in the marriage, a statement which subsumed her desire for the divorce. If her voice were not to be heard, the divorce would then be construed as initiated solely by the husband, in which case it would be illegal for him to deprive her of her dower or any other property rights.<sup>30</sup> Recording the wife's forfeit at court might work to *her* advantage as well: the written record was proof that she had obtained her release from the marriage, that is, that her husband had assented to it, freeing her, among other things, to remarry.

In the majority of *khul'* divorce cases, the women's statements regarding compensation were virtually identical: "I give up my dower, my waiting-period support, and all other of my rights." The formulaic quality of their statements, which almost always employ legal rather than colloquial terms for dower—*mehr* instead of *nikāh* or *kālīm*<sup>31</sup>—would appear to reflect a kind of court shorthand, the use of a standard format to capture the essential elements in what were in reality a variety of property settlements. The written record's use of a textual mold most likely reflects the court's attitude that *khul'* divorce was a routine procedure only the constitutive elements of which needed to be recorded, the details of property exchange being left to outside-of-court settlement.

To this set formula minor additions regarding property were possible. While forfeiting their material rights in the marriage (dower and waiting-period support), two women, Sultan and Halime, received a gold florin along with their divorce, and another, Gülpaşa, demanded 20 *akçes*. In another case, what had obviously been a dispute over property was reflected in the case record's statement that the husband Mehmed "gave up all claim...regarding the matter of the [illegible] and the household goods and other matters."<sup>32</sup>

Two cases, one dating from 945 H, suggest that some women did not easily forfeit their property rights and that their husbands needed the arena of the court to enforce settlement. The record of one Mame's divorce differs from the usual *khul'* format in that it lacks the husband's pronouncement of divorce and consists simply of Mame's statement, which was recorded at her husband's request: "this İsmail, my husband, agreed to give me a divorce, and I gave up my marriage portion and my dower and my waiting-period support, and I also gave him 1,000 *akçes* worth of stuff and an anklet...."<sup>33</sup> Perhaps Mame had been resisting forfeit of her property

and was holding out for a non-*khul'* divorce? In the 945 case, Devlet demanded her dower, clothing money, and waiting-period support, but failed to obtain them when her husband Emin produced two witnesses who testified that she had forfeited them completely.<sup>34</sup> Both women's words were recorded in colloquial language, supporting a contention of this essay that the records of non-routine cases are less formulaic and closer to the actual speech of litigants.

These two cases of possible resistance ultimately resemble *khul'* cases. But perhaps this concern with classification is exaggerated or even misplaced, since the court itself seems unconcerned to label its cases, and we should instead respect the omissions of the court record to the same degree that we respect its formulations. It may well be misleading, in fact, to look for exact correspondence with the *shari'a* categories so carefully explicated in legal manuals, and conversely to rely on legal manuals to interpret the often complex and, to us, opaque cases summarized in the court record. This is in large part because of the messiness of divorce, its complication with other issues. The court record may only be the visible tip of the domestic iceberg, whose indeterminate bulk lies below the surface of the summary record. The divorce of Tanrıvirdi and his wife İne, whom he described as unhappy in her life with him, is such a case. Here is the record of the divorce:

When Tanrıvirdi son of Mehmed and his wife İne daughter of Maksud, both from the village of Çağdıği, were present [at court], Tanrıvirdi said: 'İne here is my wife. She has no pleasure in life living together with me. I gave her a cow worth 1,000 *akçes*, let her give it back to me and I'll give her a divorce; and let her also give up her waiting-period support and her dower and her other rights.' When the said İne forfeited the cow and her waiting-period support and her right to clothing and her dower and her other rights, the said Tanrıvirdi said, 'I divorce İne with an irrevocable divorce.' There remaining no claim or suit by either against the other, they were separated from each other and it was recorded.<sup>35</sup>

İne's forfeit of her marital property suggests that this is some form of *khul'* divorce. But why does Tanrıvirdi openly describe his wife's unhappiness, a confession which strikes the modern reader as an admission of inadequacy on his part and is unusual by the standards of the 'Aintab court? His act loses some of its puzzling character when this divorce case is taken together with a case recorded nine

months earlier, obviously linked, in which İne accuses her father-in-law of rape:

İne daughter of Maksud, from the village of [Hacerkeben], came to court. Her father-in-law Mehmed son of Ümit was also present. She brought the following suit: 'My father-in-law Mehmed forced me to commit adultery with him; he destroyed my virginity.' When Mehmed was questioned, he denied [this]. When the people of the village were questioned, they said: 'Mehmed has been together with us from the time we were all children. We have never observed or heard of any wrongdoing on his part. We consider his people as friends.' The girl's stepfather Hudavirdi said: 'Previously, several times I asked her, and İne answered me saying no, and never said anything. Now she is saying this.' It was recorded as it happened.<sup>36</sup>

The scenario that seems most plausible here is that İne and Tarrivirdi's marriage is an instance of child marriage, not uncommon in sixteenth-century Anatolia,<sup>37</sup> a usual feature of which is the child bride's residence in the household of her father-in-law. The girl's stepfather says he questions her frequently—presumably to make sure that she is not being harrassed by her father-in-law; until this accusation İne has not complained. The fact that İne and Tarrivirdi are living in a different village at the time of the divorce suggests that an attempt, unsuccessful as it has turned out, was made to save the marriage by removing the couple from the father-in-law's household, although the testimony of his fellow villagers appears to have exonerated him of the charge of rape. While İne must sacrifice her property rights to escape this unhappy situation, the written record's noting of her state of mind signals the court's wish to acknowledge her dilemma, if not explicitly link it to the earlier incident.

#### ADULTERY DIVORCE, 'HONOR' DIVORCE

The most complex type of divorce case dealt with by the 'Aintab court was divorce that followed the accusation of adultery against a married woman. This divorce practice appears to have been customary in origin, although sufficiently widespread that it was incorporated into the collection of laws, or *kanunname*, promulgated under Sulaymān. The following provision of the *kanunname* imposed a substantial penalty on a man who did not divorce his adulterous wife:

If the husband accepts [this/her], and he is rich he should pay 100 *akçes* by way of cuckold tax [*köftehorluk*]; but it has become the custom to take 300 *akçes* by way of the cuckold tax. If he is of middle status, he should pay 50 *akçes*, and if he is poor, 40 or 30 *akçes*.<sup>38</sup>

While evading the explicit abrogation of the *shari'a* penalty of execution by stoning prescribed for adulterers,<sup>39</sup> Sulaymān's *kanunname* prescribed a range of fines based on the guilty party's socio-economic standing; it is striking that 300 *akçes*, the apparently customary cuckold fine, is also the largest fine that can be exacted from an adulterer, male or female.

Three adultery-divorce cases occurred during the period studied, in two of which the accused woman and her partner in adultery confessed to their crime. In the third case, in which the accused woman maintained that she had been raped, the marriage was nevertheless dissolved as an outcome of the affair.<sup>40</sup> In these cases, both husband and wife speak. What is forefronted, however, is the husband's declaration of his wife's deficient character as the reason for the dissolution of the marriage. While the structure of the three cases is identical, there is considerable space for representing the emotional tenor, the vehemence, with which a man verbalized the condemnation of his wife's character:

Case 1—Şenok: A woman like this who can't behave morally is no good for me. Let her be thrice-divorced from me.

Case 2—Mehmed: She is my wife. She doesn't obey me; she has injured my honor. Let her forfeit the remainder of her dower and her waiting-period support and her various household possessions, the quilt and mattress, and whatever else; let her keep my small daughter as long as she doesn't marry another and take care of her without requesting support from me; and I will divorce her.

Case 3—Ali (whose wife claimed she was raped): Ayşe is my wife; she is no good for me, she doesn't obey me, she follows immoral ways, she is trouble. Let her forfeit her dower and her waiting-period support and I will divorce her.

As we see, an integral part of the husband's renunciation of his wife is the demand that she give up the dower and other material rights which would normally be due her in the case of unilateral repudiation. In these cases, the record of the wives' renunciation of these rights is more or less similar, and more formulaic than their husbands' words of repudiation. Here are the registers' records of the wives' reported and/or verbatim declarations:

Case 1—Kayapaşa: The said woman forfeited her waiting-period support and her dower.

Case 2—Huri: The said Huri forfeited the remainder of her dower and her waiting-period support and all other rights belonging to her and consented to clothe and feed her small daughter, and declared: 'Henceforth I make no claim and no demand on Mehmed with regard

to my dower or any other matter, I renounce my claim to any suit whatsoever; and furthermore I will support with my own funds his small daughter who is with me.'

Case 3—Ayşe: The said Ayşe of her own free will declared, 'I forfeit everything that was purchased as part of my prompt dower' at the time of my marriage and recorded at court, my deferred dower, and my waiting-period support; henceforth I have no claim and no suit [against Ali].'

How are we to understand the roles assigned in these adultery divorce cases to males and females, to husbands and wives? It is evident that the procedural structure of these cases is aimed at clearing the husband's honor. Hence the importance of recording exactly what a man has to say about his wife's character—of giving full amplitude to his words, his only weapon to restore his social integrity—rather than simply a formula stating that his wife is morally unfit for marriage. The husband however may have had little choice regarding his role in the affair. The institutionalization of adultery-divorce through its inscription in the sultan's code implied that the honor of more than the cuckolded husband was perceived to be at stake when a woman committed adultery. By penalizing the man who might wish to keep his wife, the community and the state asserted that honor was not a private prerogative.

But why does court procedure give voice to the dishonored wife? It is not difficult to understand the logic of her forfeit of her marital property and rights to support: she has, as it were, destroyed the viability of the marriage and her marital rights along with it. But why must she publicly articulate this forfeit as a voluntary act when, as these three cases suggest, the force of custom allows her no alternative? 'Honor' divorce was a product of customary law, a form of divorce whose social and legal acceptance derived in part no doubt from the alternative it provided to the drastic *shari'a* punishment of execution by stoning. In its accommodation to *shari'a*-sanctioned forms of divorce, 'honor' divorce may have drawn on the language of *kbul'* for a mechanism to accomplish women's forfeit of property.

There are limits however to how much we can understand about the dynamics of these cases if we consider them only as divorce cases. The divorce of an adulterous wife, the 'honor' divorce, was only one piece of the complex settlement of the grave social transgression of adultery. What about the marriage of the adulterous male? Did his wife, the analog of the cuckolded male, enjoy any opportunity to penalize

her husband? The discriminatory structures of divorce in Islamic law prevented her from ridding herself of an adulterous spouse as her male counterpart could. The customary practice of 'honor' divorce, codified in the *kanunname*, thus unbalanced the symmetrical treatment of male and female adulterers under the *shari'a*, which punished them equally: here, both male and female adulterer presumably paid the penalty for their offence, but only the female suffered the social marginalization of dishonorable divorce. Or so the court proceedings suggest: perhaps there were locally sanctioned means for a woman to exact compensation from a miscreant husband—or rid herself of him—which are not visible to us through the lens of the court records.

And what about Ayşe, who claimed she was raped? As we might expect, Ayşe's claim is fully verbalized in the court record—"I didn't consent, he pushed me into the storeroom and shut the door, and forced me to have sex with him," while the testimony of her five witnesses (two women and three men) is recorded as a collective voice—"Ayşe came crying to us, and when we asked her, 'why are you crying?' she said, 'Hızır pushed me into the storeroom and forced me to have sex with him.'"<sup>42</sup> The structure of Ayşe's testimony against the alleged rapist, taken together with the provisions of both the Ottoman *kanunname* and *shari'a* (prescribing severe punishment for false accusation of adultery) suggests that she was found not guilty of adultery. Why then was she divorced? Perhaps Ayşe was considered to be guilty of "following immoral ways," as her husband claimed, merely by allowing herself to be caught in a social situation in which rape might occur. This was a society in which social interaction between women and men was based on a strict code of gender segregation; in a number of cases in the 'Aintab registers both men and women were punished for moving about town and village areas where they had no ostensible business. But while Ayşe lost her marriage and her property, perhaps she gained some advantage for her reputation and honor: the court provided her with a public arena to voice her own claim of victimization, and in its record constructed the accusation of rape as an integral part of the whole affair.

#### CONDITIONAL DIVORCE

Another set of divorce cases that came to court in 'Aintab belong to the category of 'conditional' divorce, whose distinguishing characteristic is the husband's statement of a condition, usually uttered as an oath or curse, whose actualization will precipitate divorce. For example, if a man says, "If I ever enter my brother's house again, may my wife be



thrice divorced” and if he in fact enters his brother’s house, his wife is thereby irrevocably divorced. Complications and ambiguities arising from conditional divorce utterances were common. To continue with the example above, if the man has three brothers and has not specified in his conditional statement which brother he intended, a dilemma arises. If he enters his brother’s courtyard but not the dwelling itself, he may be uncertain whether he and his wife are in fact divorced. This ambiguous status of the marriage precipitates numerous immediate problems, for example, if he and his wife were to have sexual relations, they might both be guilty of the crime of *zinā* [illicit sex].<sup>43</sup>

The habit of swearing in this manner, with its dire consequences, appears to have been quite common, for many *fetvas* issued by Ottoman chief muftis of the period and several pages of the legal handbook of al-Marghinani, popular among Ḥanāfi Ottomans, are devoted to resolving the problems incurred by this practice.<sup>44</sup> The ease of divorce for the Muslim male, through a simple verbal declaration, was thus not an unmitigated blessing, since a curse uttered in the heat of the moment could have unanticipated and undesired consequences. The loose tongues of men could be turned to advantage by discontent wives, who might refuse to resume marriages unwittingly dissolved by their husbands. Contemporary *fetvas* ruling that women refusing to remarry could be compelled to do so suggest that abandoned husbands were forced to have recourse to legal authorities to get their wives back; the following *fetva*, for example, was issued by the chief mufti Kemalpaşazade (d. 1534):

Query: If Zeyd [John Doe] pronounces something by way of a curse and must later remarry his wife, and she will not agree to the marriage and will not accept it and says ‘I’m divorced, I won’t ever return to my husband,’ what must be done according to the law?

Response: Force can be used.<sup>45</sup>

The goal of such rulings was to strengthen the institution of marriage, to compensate for the destructive force of men’s undisciplined words. If strict interpretation upheld the power of the word—the validity of a divorce pronouncement however much regretted—other mechanisms were called into play to preserve the institutions threatened thereby.

The very nature of this type of divorce meant that the conditional statement and the subsequent circumstances which actualized it were

equally important. For the divorce to be valid, the verbal utterance needed to tally precisely with the event or action precipitating divorce. Since what seems to have brought most conditional divorces to court was uncertainty about whether divorce had actually taken place, both utterance and action had to be spelled out in detail at court as well as in the court record. Consequently, among divorce-related cases in the 'Aintab records, conditional divorce cases are particularly revealing of this society's concern with the impact of particular words and their literal representation, for here we are dealing with oaths, statements that cannot be taken back or rephrased.

In the following case, a peasant seeks a ruling from the local mufti resolving the status of his marriage, which he then takes to the court to be officially recognized and recorded:

Musa son of Bali from the village of Ağçakent, in the jurisdiction of the district of 'Aintab, came to the court. Presenting a *fetva* from the hand of the present mufti of 'Aintab, Mevlana Hasan Efendi (leader of the learned scholars and support of the virtuous), he said, 'Some time ago my father-in-law Mahmud Koca and Mehmed asked to borrow a pack animal for some job they were doing; I apparently said, 'If I give you this animal, may my wife Kulef be divorced from me.' Some time after that, I lent the animal to another person.' Because the *fetva* he presented determined that divorce was not incumbent on the said Musa, permission was given for him to return to his wife for the reason that, in accordance with the *fetva*, divorce was not legally incumbent on him.<sup>46</sup>

That Musa went to the trouble of obtaining a *fetva* suggests that there was some ambiguity in his situation, perhaps the non-specificity of the conditional statement regarding to whom he must not give the animal (the non-specific "If I give you...").

A more complex and ambiguous example is the following case of the peasant Habib, who appears to have been invited or incited to a conditional divorce by the local *sipahi* [a member of the provincial cavalry who held the revenues of a village in temporary fief]:

Habib son of Hızır from the village of Zebnur was summoned to court. When he was asked if he had divorced his wife with a triple divorce if he failed to move away from the said village, he replied, 'I didn't utter the divorce formula [*i.e.*, statement of irrevocable divorce] but I did say "If I don't move away from the village, may my wife be divorced." Then I left and went to another village.' Then Musa son of Huseyin and Ahmed son of İsmail came to court and gave the

following testimony: 'The *sipahi* of the village, Hasan son of Hüseyin, said to him, "If you don't move away from the village, should your wife be divorced?" and handed him three stones. Then Habib said, "Yes, my wife should be divorced," and threw the three stones. Then he left the village and moved to another, but then he left that one and came back.' It was recorded as it happened.<sup>47</sup>

This case appears to turn on the issue of whether Habib's wife has been irrevocably divorced. Habib insists that only a single divorce has occurred, not a triple, thus irrevocable, divorce. The witnesses, however, testify in support of a triple divorce (the throwing of the three stones functions as an acceptable substitute for the triple utterance). It appears to be Habib's return to the village of Zebnur which raises the debate about his marriage: had he stayed away, the marriage would continue to be valid. His return has precipitated the divorce of his wife, whether only singly, as he insists (hence the possibility of immediate remarriage), or irrevocably (hence the necessity of her first marrying another if she and Habib are to reestablish their household).

A number of scenarios can be imagined from the scant facts of the case (scant perhaps only to us—a contemporary reader would presumably have grasped the issues more immediately). The role of the *sipahi* is central, as it is he who forces Habib to leave. A *sipahi* could normally be expected to protect his interest in the productivity of the village, whose tax revenue constituted his income, by keeping peasants on the land. In this case, as the local authority, he may be banishing a troublesome villager. The sultan in Istanbul typically dealt with troublesome pashas through temporary banishment, so why might a *sipahi* not apply his sovereign's methods locally? Contemporary *fetvas* issued by Kemalpaşazade and Ebusu'ud suggest that it was not uncommon for local agents of sultanic authority to exact compliance with their directives by asking an individual to agree to a conditional divorce as a kind of oral pledge, just as the *sipahi* Hasan has done in this case. Ebusu'ud Efendi, in the following *fetva*, deals with a similar situation:

Query: If a person of authority [*ehl-i 'örf*] says to Zeyd, 'If you don't come to me by such-and-such a time, should your wife be triply divorced?' and Zeyd says, 'She should,' and subsequently Zeyd does not hold to the condition although he does not pronounce an

additional divorce, is Zeyd's wife triply divorced simply by his saying 'she should'?

Response: Yes. Zeyd's statement operates as an answer to the statement of the person of authority.<sup>48</sup>

Or perhaps there is personal tension between *sipahi* and peasant, the former abusing his power to force the latter out of his home and village. Habib however cannot keep himself away and returns, hoping to resume his marriage, but finds himself in court being prevented from doing so. Whose interests are being protected in the upholding of the triple divorce? Who actually takes the case to court (the record does not tell us)? Is it the *sipahi*, intent upon enforcing his authority among his peasants? Is Habib's wife, perhaps alienated by her husband's behavior, behind the enforcement of the triple divorce? We must be content with our imaginings, as the court record leaves our questions unanswered.

The conditional divorce was a flexible instrument that could also be turned to positive ends. One case involved what we might call the "Martin Guerre" phenomenon—the problem of men failing to return from war, through death or perhaps a decision to abandon one's former life.<sup>49</sup> The wives of these men encountered the consequent dilemma of being in effect widows without the freedom to remarry, hence deprived of financial and social resources. That this was a problem suffered by 'Aintab families in this period of nearly constant military campaigning by the sultan Suleyman is suggested by three cases in which women sued for public support after lengthy absences by their husbands (in two cases, seven years, and in the third, three years).<sup>50</sup> To avert such a fate, Bayındır son of Şahruh, presumably a city-dweller, set up a conditional divorce for his wife Uğurluhan in the summer of 948/1541: at court he stated, "I am going to war; if I am unable to return and resume married life with my wife within three months, let her be [triply? text is defective] divorced from me." Bayındır's statement was recorded at his wife's request, and it may well have been at her initiative that the conditional divorce was publicly acknowledged at the judge's court.<sup>51</sup>

An interesting feature of conditional divorces that came to the court during the period studied is that, among the some 1,200 'Aintab cases read, they figure in the only two instances when a *fetva* from the local mufti was introduced into the court record. One of these was the case of Musa son of Bali cited above. The other instance,

while not precisely a conditional divorce, was similar in that it involved the dilemma of a man who had unintentionally placed his marriage in jeopardy:

Derviş Ali son of Alican declared, 'Some time ago, when I was ill and confined to bed, I apparently made Mehmed son of Hızır my proxy to divorce the woman Nigar daughter of Yusuf the painter, who is my wife, with a triple divorce. Now I don't have any knowledge or any memory of this, I don't know what I said when I was ill, and I wasn't thinking about getting divorced, and [I didn't mean to turn us into divorced people].'<sup>52</sup> A *fetva* on this matter issued by Mevlana Hasan Efendi (leader of the learned scholars and the abstainers) was presented; it was declared according to the intent of the *fetva* that divorce had not been accomplished, and in accordance with the *fetva*, permission was given for his wife to be returned to him.<sup>53</sup>

The position taken by the local mufti in this case was more lenient than that of either Ḥanāfi legal manuals or the *fetvas* of Ottoman chief muftis, both of which held that neither drunkenness nor delirium absolved a husband's utterance of the divorce formula of its potency.<sup>54</sup> Since local *fetvas* appear in the 'Aintab court only in these two cases, it is possible that the judge needed local sanction to go against the prevailing *sharī'a* position regarding the power of a conditional divorce, or that the hapless husbands appealed to local practice through the 'Aintab mufti against the judge's upholding of the prevailing *sharī'a* position.

#### CONCLUSION

In this essay, we have traced the semantic structuring of case records and patterns of formula vs. individual idiom within them in order to better understand the meaning of the written record constructed by the court. It is clear that the summary record omits much of the verbal activity of litigants, witnesses, and practitioners of the law in this provincial court. It seems plausible to assume that everything included in the record was considered essential to the case, and, conversely, that what is not included was not considered essential to the accuracy of any future consultation of the record. Hence a principal argument of this essay, that the manner in which verbal testimony is inscribed in the permanent record is not random but rather integral to the nature of the case.

Through its records, the court appears to serve a number of purposes. As an element in a larger system of judicial administration, it satisfies the formal interests of government and religion in the

application of the law. As the arena where various legal discourses are woven into a practice, it solves the problem at hand by balancing the requirements of normative law with the needs of local users. Finally, as the primary site for the moral regulation of the community, the court provides a public forum for individuals to make statements about themselves that affect their status and reputation in the community.

More specifically, in the matter of divorce, the court has acted in a number of ways. In enforcing women's forfeit of marital property rights in *khul'* divorce and in compelling the payment of dower to women divorced unilaterally, it has protected the property rights of both men and women. In applying the 'Aintab *mufii's* reading of the law, it has preserved the institution of marriage where that was the wish of the litigants. In providing a mechanism for the soldier's wife to be free should her husband fail to return from war, it has protected the social viability of the individual. In the case of the 'cuckolded' husbands, it has helped to recuperate their social reputation. Even in the difficult case of the child bride İne, it has listened to the accusing voice of a minor; while the court did not rush to judgment against the accused father-in-law, neither did it entirely dismiss the plight of the unhappy girl (how it may have given consideration to the young husband is less obvious).

In these cases, the court appears biased towards men. More often than not it was the property of men that was protected. While the court listened to two women's claims of rape, it more vigorously protected the honor and social standing of men. But if the court seems to serve better the interests of men than of women, at least with regard to divorce, it is not necessarily the fault of the court itself. Normative law and custom favored men in providing means to escape unsatisfactory marriage. But is the court merely a neutral instrument for the enforcement of such law or can it act as an instrument for change or even an arena for the exploitation of the very law it is intended to enforce? What we know historically of a woman's recourse to escape unsatisfactory marriage—deserting her marital home for her natal home or refusing remarriage—were means not typically demonstrated at court. But might it be possible that some of our cases are not what they seem on the surface? For instance, might adultery, feigned or real, provide a route of escape from marriage? in other words, might an adultery-divorce case be less the consequence of illicit passion than a subterfuge for ending a marriage?

That two of the three adultery-divorce cases coming to court in 1540–41 involve confession calls for consideration, particularly in view of the fact that *sharī'a* manuals explicitly direct the judge to discourage confession by adulterers.

Divorce was a phenomenon where the oral had unmitigated and direct consequences. Words were a powerful but potentially harmful tool, which could as easily injure men and women as accomplish their desires. That divorce was so immediately precipitated by words men spoke in anger or frustration lent a vulnerability to the institution of marriage, the bedrock of Islamic social cohesion and order. Many, perhaps most, of the divorces that occurred in 'Aintab in 1540–41 are invisible to us because the court played no role in them. We cannot know how many marriages unilaterally ended by men's pronouncements were permanently broken or how many repaired or renewed. Nor can we know how many wives were unhappy victims of their husbands' arbitrary action or how many relieved to be released from bad marriages, how many husbands were glad to be rid of troublesome wives or how many dismayed at the loss of their spouse's companionship and labor.

Divorce in some of its forms and in some of its consequences, however, did bring members of the 'Aintab community to its court. People brought their divorces to the 'Aintab court because some act of speech needed to be publicly processed. They generally came either to have their statements publicly acknowledged and recorded or publicly evaluated and mediated. In the first instance, people used the court as communal witness of their words when verbal statements were instrumental to achieving their goal. Examples of individuals using the court in this way include the women and men suing for *khul'* divorce, the woman whose husband was going to war, and the cuckolded husbands seeking 'honor' divorces. Perhaps the attempt by Ayşe, the rape victim, to salvage some public honor despite her public repudiation belongs in this category. Others needed the court as communal mediator to protect them either from themselves or from others. Men who regretted what they had said hoped that the court might undo the consequences of their unruly words. Women trying to recover some property from dissolved marriages needed the court to intervene against resistant husbands. In different ways, these individuals appealed to the court and its judge to frame their words, to give their words validity by encompassing them in a communal record, or to bound them by setting limits to their consequences.

## NOTES

1. The two registers from which this essay is drawn are found in the Rare Book and Manuscript Collection of the National Library (Milli Kütüphane), Ankara, Turkey. I am indebted to the staff of this library, especially Dursun Kaya, and also to the staff of the Prime Ministry Archives (Başbakanlık Arşivi), Istanbul, for their assistance. I am grateful to the Social Science Research Council and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (Fulbright Grant) for funding my research in these collections.

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2. In the Gaziantep series of court records, Register 161 covers the period Cemaziülevvel 947–Zilhicce 947/September 1540–May 1541, and Register 2 covers Muḥarrem 948–Cemaziülahır 948/May 1541–September 1541. In subsequent notes, these registers will be referred to as AS161 and AS2 (AS = 'Aintab Sicil). I will designate cases as follows: AS161 25b indicates the second case recorded on page 25 of Register 161 (the pages of the registers have been numbered by the library staff consecutively rather than as folios).

3. On the *iqrar*, see Y. Linant de Bellefonds, s.v. "İqrâr," EI(2), vol. 3, pp. 1078–81.

4. The defendant, however, might refuse to take the oath, with the result that the case would be dismissed or decided in favor of the plaintiff. For a typical administration of the oath, see AS2 32b; for a Christian *dhimmi* swearing on the Bible see AS2 79b; for a defendant's refusal to take an oath (*nükûl*), see AS2 83b, 136c.

5. AS161 35a. On the right of neighborhoods to evict undesirable residents, see Selami Pulaha and Yaşar Yücel, "I. Selim Kanunnamesi (1512–20) ve XVI. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısının Kimi Kanunları," *Belgeler* 12.16 (1987): 31, 71; Uriel Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 93, 130.

6. I am indebted to Elizabeth Zachariadou for drawing this issue to my attention.

7. This solution to the puzzle of the meaning of *mektûb* in this context was suggested by William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 83–84.

8. Hüseyin Özdeğer, *Onaltıncı Asırda Ayıntab Livası* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi, 1988), p. 115.

9. For the population of Bursa, see Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in An Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600–1700* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1988), p. 12: Gerber estimates the population of the city to have



been 19,714 in 1631. For Kayseri, Ronald Jennings estimates the population to be 25,000 in 1583 ("Kadi, Court, and Legal Procedure in 17th C. Ottoman Kayseri," *Studia Islamica* 48 [1978]: 133, n. 1).

10. The following remarks are based upon numbers 186, 373, and 231 in the Tapu Tahrir Defter series; these registers for 'Aintab are analyzed by Özdeğer, *Ayıntab Livası*. For the surrounding areas, I consulted Tapu Tahrir Defter 184 (Birecik), 402 (Dulkadiye), and 998 (covering what is today southeastern Anatolia, northern Syria, and northern Iraq). All of these registers are located in the Prime Ministry Archives, Istanbul.

11. Tapu Tahrir Defter 373, f. 44-45 and f. 289-90. Özdeğer (*Ayıntab Livası*) omits any reference to this Armenian population of 'Aintab from his published version of these registers.

12. Tapu Tahrir Defter 301, which is analyzed in Özdeğer, *'Ayıntab Livası*, pp. 141-93.

13. The first (extant) register in the series for Manisa, which dates from 929-53/1522-46, is an odd collection of transcribed letters from Ottoman princes resident in the city, brief snatches of annals, and court cases; it has the appearance of having been cobbled together from a collection of valuable papers and bound as a register at some point in time (Manisa Şer'îye Sicili No. 1, National Library, Ankara).

14. My principal reference here is Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

15. On the Ottoman mufti, see I.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinde İlmîye Teşkilatı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988); Richard Repp, *The Mufti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986); Haim Gerber, *State, Society, and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), especially Chapter 3.

16. The provincial cavalry consisted of 2 *za'ims*, 86 *sipahis*, and a total of 159 armed retainers [*cebelü*].

17. The collection of imperial orders to the governors and kadis of 16th-century Palestine published by Uriel Heyd in *Ottoman Documents on Palestine* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), clearly illustrates this system of parallel judicial enforcement.

18. The penal code as operative under Sulaymân is studied, transcribed, and translated by Uriel Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law*.

19. Kemalpaşazade, *Fetava Cem'îye*, Süleymaniye Library, ms Dar ul-Mesnevi 118, f. 31v; Ebusu'ud, *Bâ'z ul-Fetava*, Süleymaniye Library, ms Yeni Cami 685/2, f. 154r.

20. Tapu Tahrir Defter 186, f. 6r-v: "...siyasete müstahak olanlar[ın]...istihkaklarına göre günah eyledükleri mahalde siyaset edeler; fi'l-cümle cüzi ve külli cera'im vakı' oldukda Kanun-ı Osmaniye muraca'at olunub alına; tecavüz olunub ziyade nesneleri alınmaya."

21. For a brief discussion of the position of women in Hanâfi law, see John L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse, N.Y.:

Syracuse University Press, 1982), pp. 23–39. More comprehensive discussion of divorce law can be found in Joseph Schacht, *Introduction to Islamic Law*, pp. 163–66 (Schacht's discussion is based principally on the Ḥanāfi school); see also Schacht, s.v. "Talāq," EI(1), vol. 8, pp. 636–40. The handbook of Ḥanāfi law most easily accessible to English speakers is the *Hidaya* of al-Marghinanī (d. 1197) (*The Hedaya, or Guide: A Commentary on the Mussulman Laws*, trans. Charles Hamilton [London, Wm. H. Allen and Co., 1870]). For a comprehensive discussion of divorce in Maliki law, see Aharon Layish, *Divorce in the Libyan Family* (New York and Jerusalem: New York University Press and Magnes Press, 1991).

22. On the popularity of al-Halabī's legal treatise, *Multaka al-Abhur*, see Şükürü Selim Has, "The Use of *Multaqa'l-Abhur* in the Ottoman Madrasas and in Legal Scholarship," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 7–8 (1988): 394–418.

23. Ibrahim al-Halabī, *Multaka al-Abhur*, vol. 1, p. 303.

24. Drawing on evidence from modern Libyan court records, Aharon Layish notes that there are reasons, which may only come to the fore years later, to have such divorces registered at court—e.g., to clarify marital status (important to the wife if she wishes to remarry) and/or satisfactory agreement as to property and financial obligations (*Divorce in the Libyan Family*, pp. 28–29).

25. On court fees, see Pulaha and Yücel, "I. Selim Kanunnamesi (1512–20) ve XVI. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısının Kimi Kanunları," 31.

26. AS161 51a. For the sake of consistency, I have given all money amounts cited in this essay in osmanī (Ottoman) *akçes*; Habibe's claim and award were actually in halebī (Aleppan) *akçes* (one osmanī *akçe* equalled 2.5 halebī *akçes*).

27. AS161 12d, 13a.

28. Here the scribe mistakenly wrote "as proxy for the said Ayşe"; I have corrected this error.

29. AS161 4b.

30. al-Marghinanī, *Hedaya*, 115.

31. *Kālīn*, also *qālīn*, is a vulgarization of the Persian *kābin*, which exists also in a Turkish nominalized form, *kābinlik* (James W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon* [Istanbul: H. Mattheosian, 1921], pp. 1423, 1513). The substitution of *qaff* for *kef* in the vulgarized form may derive from confusion with the Arabic *qālī*, deferred dower. Here, *kālīn* appears to refer to the deferred dower, and *nikāh* to the prompt dower. See also AS161 1c for *kābin* used for dower with no distinction with regard to prompt or deferred (as *mehr* is used in most cases).

32. The cases of Sultan, Halime, Gülpaşa, and Mehmed are contained, respectively, in AS161, 22b, AS161 168e, AS2 282a, AS161 10b.

33. AS2 267b.

34. AS1 61 1c.

35. AS2 300c.

36. AS161 136c. I am grateful to Professor Şinasi Tekin of Harvard University for his help in understanding the statement of the witnesses in this case.

37. On child marriage, see İlber Ortaylı, "Anadolu'da XVI. Yüzyılda Evlilik İlişkileri Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 1 (1980): 33–40.

38. Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law*, pp. 57–58, 95–96.

39. To qualify for the penalty of stoning, the individual had to be Muslim, free, sane, adult, and in a consummated marriage.

40. These cases are found in AS161 335b,c; AS2 1b,2a; AS2 154c, 155a,b. In another adultery-divorce case, from the year 945 H. and bound into the register AS161, the wife and her lover confess their adultery in one *sijill*, while in the following *sijill* the wife renounces her material rights in her marriage and her husband declares a triple divorce; unlike the cases below, the husband is given no voice other than the few words of the divorce pronouncement.

41. The dower (*mehr*) consisted of two parts: prompt (*mu'eccel*) dower, paid at the conclusion of the marriage contract, and deferred (*mu'ahher*) dower, paid at the termination of the marriage.

42. AS2 154c, 155a.

43. *Fetvas* concerning conditional divorce have been studied by Colin Imber in "Involuntary' Annulment of Marriage and Its Solutions in Ottoman Law," *Turcica* 25 (1993): 59–69.

44. Kemalpaşazade, *Fetava*, ff. 39v–45r; Ebusu'ud, *Ba'z ul-Fetava*, ff. 150r–51r; al-Marghinanī, *Hedaya*, pp. 94–99.

45. Kemalpaşazade, *Fetava*, ff. 16v, 42r.

46. AS161 352c.

47. AS2 326b.

48. Ebusu'ud, *Ba'z ul-Fetava*, f. 150r. See also a similar *fetva* of Kemalpaşazade, *Fetava*, f. 41r.

49. The story of Martin Guerre, a French peasant who abandoned his village in 1548, and his wife Bertrande de Rols has been studied by Natalie Zemon Davis in *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983).

50. AS2 86c, 240b, 313a.

51. AS2 188c. The conditional divorce was recorded on 18 Rebi'ülsani 948/11 August 1541.

52. Tentative translation of a tentative reading of the scribe's scrawl: "seyyib dahi etmedüm."

53. AS161 350b.

54. al-Marghinani, *Hedaya*, 75–76; Kemalpaşazade, *Fetava*, f. 42v (Query: If Zeyd divorces his wife when he is ill and delirious, is the divorce valid according to the law? Response: Yes).

## WOMEN AND THE PUBLIC EYE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ISTANBUL

*Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr*

*This chapter examines the relationship between Islamic law, custom, and kanun on sexual transgression (i.e., fornication and adultery) in the Ottoman empire. The court-records of eighteenth-century Istanbul shed light on the changing sexual morals of a great cosmopolitan center.*

Research on the history of Ottoman women has lagged behind similar studies in other regions.<sup>1</sup> Until now, only scattered articles on the changing position of women in Ottoman society during the pre-modern period have been available. This gap in systematic analysis is slowly being bridged as more monographic studies based on the Islamic urban court-records bring to light the role of women and minorities in Ottoman history. Some of these works have covered Anatolian and Arab cities and provinces, but the Ottoman imperial capital remains understudied. My project aims to fill this void partly by focusing on the history of Ottoman women during the eighteenth-century, a period viewed in the scholarly literature as the culmination of Ottoman decline.<sup>2</sup>

Eighteenth-century Istanbul was the scene of many cultural and social changes taking place in the Ottoman empire. The Islamic court-records are the most important source-material for studying the parameters of these changes and for capturing the legal and social dynamism of Ottoman society, which tends to get lost in the general historiography. Ottoman legal studies view the eighteenth century within the paradigm of decline characterized by oppression, extortion, and judicial corruption before the westernizing reforms of the nineteenth century set in.<sup>3</sup> Gerber has recently emphasized the bargaining and intermediary position of Ottoman Islamic courts between the government authorities and the civil society of the

seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> I argue that in this bargaining process, women occupied an important role as part of the emerging civil society. Moreover, the distinction between the *sharī'a* [Islamic law] and *kanun* [imperial decree] and between the judicial and executive authority of the *kadı* [Islamic judge] and the administrative officials (grand vizier, governor, *muhtasib*) tends to obscure the great overlap in jurisdiction and interdependence in function of these two legal branches, which became more apparent in the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

I will demonstrate, for example, that while the *kanun* offered specific punishment for fornication and adultery [*zinā'*], i.e., the payment of a specific fine in accordance with the marital status of the accused and his/her economic standing, and the Islamic courts followed this procedure, avoiding the harsher penalty prescribed by the *sharī'a*, but at the same time placing the emphasis on testimony, evidence, and witnesses that were not required by the penal code in the *kanun*. Gerber has also pointed out that during the eighteenth century the *sharī'a* and the Ottoman courts rose to prominence.<sup>6</sup> During the classical Ottoman period, the definition and penalty of fornication, adultery, and sodomy were placed in the penal code and within the jurisdiction of both the *sharī'a* and *kanun* while the Islamic courts maintained control over the investigation and trial of the lawsuits. Moreover, according to the Islamic court-records investigated for this study, in the eighteenth century, banishment and expulsion from the community were the preferred type of punishment prescribed by the *kadı* since the specific fines spelled out in sixteenth-century *kanunnames* [code of imperial laws] bore little monetary value two centuries later. The *sicill* records of Istanbul for the eighteenth century contain no instance of *recm* [public stoning to death], flogging, imprisonment, or the death sentence. More importantly, the Islamic court-records reveal a softening of attitudes, tolerance, and a change in the cultural mores of a growing cosmopolitan and international city in the Islamic world.

The Istanbul Islamic court-records in the Müftülük Archives in Istanbul cover a span of four hundred years. As there are gaps in the years for which records are available, the fires of Istanbul must have destroyed many registers. The earliest Islamic court-records for Istanbul and most of the Ottoman empire date from the sixteenth century, with the exception of those for Bursa, which date back to

1455. These records were kept in the form of bound registers (40 to 300 folios) that contain copies of the deeds for sales, purchases, loans, and endowments by Muslim and non-Muslim men and women. In addition to its function as a notary public, the *mahkeme* [Islamic court] was also a court of appeals for the settlement of disputes and for litigation among family members, craftsmen, merchants, peasants, minorities, women, and slaves. The *kadı* had at his service several *naibs* [deputies] and a staff of more than ten people who carried out scribal duties, inspection, and law enforcement. The *kadı* was appointed by the state and received a daily salary. In addition, he collected fines and fees from the registration of property transfers, the purchase or sale of estates, and litigation.

The cases brought by women ranged from the registration of sales, purchases of real estate, payment of loans and debts, establishment of charitable endowments [*waqfs*], to disputes dealing with inheritance, guardianship, divorce, and child custody. The strong presence of women in the law courts and the imperial council testifies not only to the violation of their legal rights, but also reflects their awareness of those very rights contained in the *sharī'a* and their determination to defend them. Moreover, it shows the relative openness of the judicial system to women as both litigants and defendants. Elsewhere, we have demonstrated that even though the predominant number of their lawsuits remained limited to disputes dealing with family matters and inheritance, women showed a keen interest in public issues that touched directly upon their daily lives.

Throughout the Ottoman centuries, the *sharī'a*, based on the Hanafi school of law, did not change its basic orientation towards Muslim family law concerning marriage, divorce, and inheritance.<sup>7</sup> The remarkable consistency of legal records throughout the Ottoman empire is due to the centralized structure of the Ottoman judicial system. The post-Tanzimat period witnessed the first significant break with this long tradition, although there remained a great deal of continuity in the legal jurisdiction of the *sharī'a* over family affairs. The content and types of lawsuits and petitions nevertheless reflected general changes in Ottoman society and, as such, they provide the best tools for gauging the extent of social and economic transformation in the empire as a whole.

A deeper look into the contents of lawsuits dealing with issues relating to women as both litigants and defenders during the eighteenth century reveals their increasing presence in the urban social scene. This was in part due to the changing dynamics of the Ottoman state-structure that allowed for a better integration of minorities and the subject population through a more flexible fiscal and legal system. Elsewhere, I have argued that at the same time that the sources of revenue were being farmed out to private individuals as tax farmers, the legal system was also making room for a greater presence of the subject people as litigants and petitioners to make up for the loss of Ottoman central authority.<sup>8</sup> Women, along with other minorities in Ottoman society, stood to benefit from this development. The picture, however, was complicated: serious set-backs to this development were experienced whenever conservative religious reactions gave rise to government regulations on segregation. Prohibitions then aimed to impose limits on women's public presence as well as social interaction among Muslims and non-Muslims. This was by no means an exclusively eighteenth-century development. Zilfi has already underlined the fundamentalist movement against Sufi-oriented deviance (dancing, music, drinking, etc.) in the seventeenth century headed by the Kadızadeli Mullas. She has eloquently demonstrated, furthermore, that the eighteenth century provided for the rise of a more conservative *medrese*- and Istanbul-centered '*ulamā*' against the provincial and marginal but more popular and ambitious preachers who had climbed up the ladder of success too quickly during the seventeenth century.<sup>9</sup> Thus, during the Kadızadeli ascendancy, in line with prohibitions against the drinking of alcohol, coffee, and smoking, harsher measures were demanded for the punishment of adultery. The first and perhaps only public stoning of a woman accused of adultery was carried out in Istanbul under the leadership of the preacher Vani Efendi.<sup>10</sup> But this harsher customary practice remained outside the *sharī'a*-prescribed penalty. In addition, during the eighteenth century, in contrast to rigid government decrees against moral transgression, the *sharī'a* maintained a more tolerant outlook as women and minorities frequented the courts in growing numbers. While it was nearly impossible to tamper with the basic principles of the *sharī'a* regarding women's rights, government decrees on public interaction, fornication, adultery, and dress-code

were placed within the jurisdictions of *kanun*, although religious justifications were always present in the wording. Both aspects of this development will be examined in this paper. But let us first examine the position of the Qur'ān on gender relations and on moral conduct.

The primary concern of the *shari'a* in protecting the rights of women was to preserve the family unit and maintain the moral basis of society based on Islamic principles. The Qur'ān, for example, promoted marriage even among free men and servile women (concubines), dealt harshly with fornication and adultery, and discouraged interaction among adult men and women outside the confines of the family.

Marry the spouseless among you, and your slaves and handmaidens that are righteous if they are poor, God will enrich them of His bounty; God is All-embracing, All-knowing. And let those who find not the means to marry be abstinent till God enriches them of His bounty. Those who your right hand own who seek emancipation, contract them accordingly, if you know some good in them; and give them of the wealth of God that He has given you. And constrain not your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire to live in chastity, that you may seek the chance goods of the present life. Whosoever constrains them, surely God, after their being constrained, is All-forgiving, All-compassionate. (Sūra 24: 30)"

Marriage was also the rite of passage into adulthood: married men and women were both regarded as more responsible in public and private life. Married women, in addition, gained more physical freedom since their new status raised their position in the public eye that no longer viewed them as a potential social threat. The transgression of these boundaries, however, according to the Qur'ān, deserved a punishment of one hundred stripes to be administered publicly, provided that there were at least four witnesses.

The fornicatress and the fornicator scourge each one of them a hundred stripes, and in the matter of God's religion let no tenderness for them seize you. If you believe in God and the Last Day; and let a party of the believers witness their chastisement. The fornicator shall marry none but a fornicatress or an idolatress, and the fornicatress—none shall marry her but a fornicator and an idolater; that is forbidden to the believers. (Sūra 24:2)"<sup>12</sup>



At the same time, placing a great importance on the four witnesses, the Qur'ān viewed slander and false accusation as an equally offensive act deserving eighty stripes.

And those who cast it up on women in wedlock, and then bring not four witnesses scourge them with eighty stripes, and do not accept any testimony of theirs ever; they are the ungodly, save such as repent thereafter; surely God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate. And those who cast it up on their wives having no witnesses except themselves, the testimony of one of them shall be to testify by God four times that he is of the truthful, and a fifth time, that the curse of God shall be upon him, if he should be of the liars. It shall avert from her the chastisement, if she testifies by God four times that he is of the liars, and a fifth time, that the wrath of God shall be upon her, if he should be of the truthful. (Sūra 24:5)<sup>13</sup>

The Sūra of Light, partly quoted above, was revealed when Muḥammad's thirteen year old wife, 'Ā'ishā bint Abī Bakr, was accused of adultery by a group of his followers. After a period of confusion, this revelation assured Muḥammad of 'Ā'ishā's innocence and prescribed a punishment of eighty stripes for the slanderers. In the same chapter, veiling or the covering of private parts and adornments were recommended for Muslim women. The prophet took a great deal of care not to accept immediately the truthfulness of this accusation and sent 'Ā'ishā home to her parents before reaching a final decision. This incident also shows how sensitive the position of women in Muḥammad's own household had become due to their growing visibility in the daily affairs of the community and in politics that continued in the case of 'Ā'ishā after the prophet's death. The Qur'ānic revelation, as harsh as it may sound, however, made an important allowance for a woman's own testimony which is as valid as that of her husband and the four witnesses. It also demonstrates that the social background of women played an important role in their public standing. Women from elite households had to be more careful about their reputation since the whole community stood guard over their behavior. A small slip on their part undermined the social standing of the entire extended family. Often, without resorting to legal authorities, families took the law into their own hands, particularly when the honor and the reputation of women was questioned. Family feuds and vendettas developed daily over issues of slander, accusations of adultery, rape, and elopement.

In the Ottoman empire, the punishments for fornication and adultery were placed within the jurisdictions of the *sharī'a*, *kanun*, and *örf* [customary practice]. The *fetvas* of Ebu Su'ud Efendi (d. 1574), the leading Şeyhülislam during the sixteenth century, prescribed the penalty of death without specifying who should carry out the punishment for fornication and adultery [*zinā'*].<sup>14</sup> Moreover, if a man murdered his wife after discovering her in the act of adultery, her relatives could not demand *kisas* [retaliation] or blood money from him. The investigation of the truth of adultery, according to this *fetva*, is also forbidden. Clearly, the *fetva* [religious opinion] of this high-ranking judicial official leaves the carrying out of the customary death penalty which did not exist in the Qur'ān or the *sharī'a* to the family members. The Islamic courts were advised not to interfere in the matter unless an actual accusation by witnesses was brought to the *kadı's* court in which case the imposed penalty was severe chastisement which included imprisonment. If a group of men and women continued engaging in fornication and adultery, the *hadd* [legal penalty] of the public stoning of the women and the imprisonment of the men was prescribed after a proper investigation had been carried out.<sup>15</sup>

The *kanunnames* issued by Mehmed the Conqueror and Sulaymān the Magnificent spelled out specifically the penalty for different categories of fornication based on the marital status and the financial standing of the accused, which were not defined in the Qur'ān. Instead of chastisement and banishment, the Ottoman *kanunnames* prescribed the payment of fines by the accused. The texts of two *kanunnames* which were published by Barkan and Heyd laid out the penalties for fornication, adultery, and abduction.<sup>16</sup> In short, in the Suleymanic code, the penalty on married offenders ranged from 300 to 40 *akçes* depending on the financial ability of the accused. This did not rule out the Qur'ānic penalty of one hundred stripes, which was applied from time to time. Here I am interested in how the *kadı* resolved the difference between the Qur'ānic injunction, the *fetvas* of high-ranking religious authorities, customary practice, and the *kanun*; these matters are explored here through analysis of actual cases brought into eighteenth-century courts. Moreover, the burden of preventive punishment, *i.e.*, veiling, fell on women since in Islam women are treated as equal to, even superior to, men in their active sexual behavior. Female sexuality is

not repressed but rather controlled and placed within the marital arrangement. Absence of restrictions can be said to result in corruption, moral decay, and social chaos. Women were held responsible for sustaining sexual ethics since they had more control of their sexuality.

Although largely an urban phenomenon in the Ottoman empire, veiling, segregation, and the public and private division of space aimed to ensure social peace and harmony as well as adherence to required Islamic conduct. The gender division of space did not spread deeply into rural and tribal communities primarily due to the necessity of women's participation in agriculture and animal husbandry. Moreover, women in rural and tribal societies showed more initiative and exercised greater freedom in decision-making.<sup>17</sup> In urban communities, working-class women carried on their active roles in otherwise male domains. The economic burden placed on their families required them to seek wage-earning jobs usually as weavers or as household servants to supplement the meager income of their husbands. Children were also employed in the craft-guilds as laborers, a phenomenon that still continues to exist in Turkey. In general, Muslim society tolerated working-class women's participation in public activities as long as they did not transgress moral norms that governed women's social roles.

This is not to deny the enormous power and initiative enjoyed by middle-class women within their large households. Women were in charge of the daily decision-making and conflict-resolution at home that extended their influence beyond the household into the neighborhood and the community at large. The boundaries of gendered space were constantly being crossed by women who became more actively involved in public life during the eighteenth century. Ottoman women participated in money lending, the buying and selling of real estate, the renting of residential units, shops, *hans* and *hamams*, and the weaving of rugs and textiles. In an increasingly crowded and cosmopolitan city like Istanbul, it was becoming more difficult to maintain the Islamic requirements of gender segregation. Imperial edicts and prohibitions on women's freedom of movement, dress code and the imitation of European fashion, and on smoking and the drinking of alcoholic beverages in public by Muslim men reflect not only the extent of government control in public and private spheres but demonstrate also the constant violation of social

and religious boundaries set by the *shari'a* in this period. Despite its cosmopolitan character, daily life in Istanbul as the seat of an Islamic empire, was subject to constant government regulation. Many of these imperial edicts touched directly upon the lives of women and minorities.<sup>18</sup> The increasing public visibility of women on the one hand and, on the other, growing government inspection of public morality made the eighteenth century an interesting period of constant interaction and compromise between the government authorities and the public at large. The level of any compromise resulting in greater freedom for women and the minorities can be gauged through the resolution of lawsuits brought into the Islamic courts. A brief outline of some cultural and social transformations taking place in the Ottoman capital during this period provides a context with which to assess how the eighteenth century witnessed both continuity and change in the political, social, and cultural realms.

The military set-backs at the hands of the Habsburgs (the Treaty of Carlowitz, 1699), the Persians (the Treaty of Qasr-i Shirin, 1745), and the Russians (the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, 1774) gave rise to a keen awareness among Ottoman intellectuals of the need for change. There was, however, considerable disagreement on the kinds of innovative practices to be borrowed from the 'infidels.' The printing press was introduced in 1724 and in a few decades there were translated a dozen books from western languages into Ottoman Turkish. The influence of European baroque was already discernible in the design of the Nur-i Osmaniye mosque, built in 1755. The pleasure gardens and imperial palaces began also acquiring a western (French) air to them that was most obvious in the use of furniture, ornamentation, flower beds, and marble fountains.<sup>19</sup> During the reign of Ahmed III (r. 1115-43/1703-30), pleasure palaces that belonged to the sultan's daughters, sisters, and nieces spread along the Bosphorus.<sup>20</sup> According to Artan, in this period, the Ottoman imperial women were given permission to construct their own palaces and reside there rather than in the Topkapı palace. Furthermore, reflecting their growing social and political power, they were free to continue residing in their own palaces even after they married state dignitaries.<sup>21</sup> The emergence of Ottoman royal women from the confines of the Topkapı palace, Artan argues, was a clear indication of the growing openness to public gaze and public display of private

lives to enhance the prestige and the enduring nature of the Ottoman dynasty in the face of new challenges.<sup>22</sup> Change, however, was not limited to the top layers of Ottoman society.

The Tulip period [*lale devri*] began an era of cultural contact with the west that did not remain limited to practical matters such as military technology but extended to artistic influences. In addition, the establishment of permanent European embassies in Istanbul and the growing number of European diplomats, merchants, and travelers who resided there enhanced the social and cultural diversity of eighteenth-century urban life. At the same time, the religious authorities and some government officials saw a greater need to preserve traditional structures of Ottoman society, now threatened by the active presence of 'Frankish communities' in Istanbul and other Ottoman port-cities. In Istanbul, most Europeans were housed in the quarter of Galata and Pera, next to Greek, Armenian, and Jewish communities. This placement ensured government supervision of their activities that aimed to prevent too much interaction between them and the Muslims. Nevertheless, Galata was acquiring a fashionable air and it was inevitable that Muslim men and women would soon begin showing more curiosity and interest in mingling with the Franks. But let us first examine the physical and social setting of eighteenth-century Istanbul where the drama of everyday life unfolded with women emerging as major players.

Istanbul was composed of four *kadas* or districts (Istanbul, Galata, Üsküdar, and Eyyub), each administered by a *kadı* and his deputies. We have chosen the first district named after the city which included a large residential area within the city-walls located on both sides of the Golden Horn. This district incorporated sections of Galata and the quarters of Kasim Pasha, Balat, Fener, Eminönü, Mahmud Pasha, Süleymaniye, Saray, Sultan Ahmed, Bayezid, Ak Saray, Davud Pasha, Ali Pasha, Mustafa Pasha, Samatya, Ibrahim Pasha, Yedi Kule, Bayram Pasha, Fatih, Sarachane, Top Kapı, Demir Kapı, Edirne Kapı, Kum Kapı, etc.<sup>23</sup> The district of Istanbul was ethnically and religiously diverse like the rest of the city. But there were certain *mahalles* that remained more or less homogeneous in their religious make-up. For example, Balat was predominantly Jewish and the Fener quarter next to it was inhabited by the Greeks. The Armenians resided predominantly in Samatya, Sulu Kule, Galata, and Pera.

Galata and Pera remained diverse but were for the most part inhabited by Greeks, Jews, Armenians, and Europeans.<sup>24</sup> According to Inalcik, in the sixteenth century, the four *nahiyes* of Mustafa Pasha, Davud Pasha, Ali Pasha and Topkapı were relatively large and grew in population under Süleyman.<sup>25</sup> The total population of Istanbul approached a figure of more than 300,000 residents in the sixteenth century.<sup>26</sup> By the late seventeenth century, the population had more than doubled and reached a total figure of 700,000 to 800,000. The Muslims made up 58 percent of the residents of greater Istanbul while the remaining 42 percent belonged to the non-Muslims.<sup>27</sup> It must be kept in mind that a great earthquake in 1766 and a big fire sixteen years later on 22 August 1782 decimated a high percentage of Istanbul's residents. Nevertheless, by the late eighteenth century the total population exceeded one million and had spread beyond the city walls.<sup>28</sup> The exact population figures and concentration, household size, and changes in the social structure of the city during the late nineteenth century have been studied by Duben and Behar, but the eighteenth century remains unexplored.<sup>29</sup>

The residents of the *nahiye* [district] of Istanbul were drawn from all walks of life; they belonged to the military-bureaucratic class, the '*ulamā*', merchant households, and craft guilds. This district contained the Topkapı palace, the royal residence and the seat of government, imperial *waqf* complexes (Aya Sofia, Suleymaniye, Yeni Cami', Nur-i Osmaniye, Laleli), and the commercial hub of the city. According to Inalcik, there were three thousand one hundred and eighteen *waqfs* in the district of Istanbul by the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the royal women of the Ottoman household continued to be active in founding and supporting charitable foundations, which were built in the district of Istanbul and in Üsküdar. For example, the mosque of Mihrimah Sultan, the daughter of Sulaymān the Magnificent (r. 926–74/1520–66), was built by Sinan in Üsküdar. The Yeni Cami' was originally founded by Safiyye Sultan, the mother of Mehmed III, in 1597 but was completed in 1663 by Turhan Sultan (d. 1683), the mother of Mehmed IV (r. 1058–99/1648–87), who added a school, fountains, and the Misir Çarşısı (Egyptian market).<sup>31</sup> Kösem Sultan (d. 1651), the mother of Murad IV (r. 1032–48/1623–40) and Ibrahim (r. 1049–58/1640–48), founded a major complex (mosque, *medrese*, hospice, bath, *han*) in Üsküdar. In the following century,

Gülnüş Sultan (d. 1715), the mother of Mustafa II (r. 1106–15/1695–1703) and Ahmed III (r. 1115–43/1703–30), built the Yeni Valide mosque in the same district.<sup>32</sup> In addition, women of non-royal households assumed a greater role in founding smaller *waqfs* that were predominantly made up of single residential units.<sup>33</sup> The charitable activities of royal women, which contained an important religious and pious element, set the trend for the rest of society to follow. They also legitimized women's participation in public activities and enhanced their social prestige. Their public role was not however, limited only to charitable and pious activities. The participation of the average Ottoman women in social and economic activities increased considerably during the eighteenth century.

At the same time, women were in a particularly vulnerable position since their appearance and social conduct bore special importance for the family and the community at large. From time to time, imperial edicts were issued to restrict the freedom of movement by women and their choice of fashion and clothing. For example, in an order issued to the *kadı* and *agha* of Janissaries in Şevval 1138/May 1725, Muslim women were prohibited from imitating the clothing of the "infidels," particularly their innovative accessories and headgear that violated the requirements of "proper attire." More specifically, Muslim women were to be prevented from wearing cloaks with large collars, long ribbons in their hair, and large kerchiefs. If they violated these restrictions, their clothes and collars were to be cut down. Moreover, the *imams* [prayer leaders] of the residential quarters were ordered to threaten and harass those tailors and ribbon-sellers who promoted attire suitable only for 'prostitutes.'<sup>34</sup> The husbands of these women were also advised to impose 'modest' clothing on their wives and to help maintain a proper Islamic appearance. Women who violated these rules were compared to 'prostitutes' and 'infidels.' These edicts make it clear that an increasing number of Muslim women in the capital were putting aside the veil in public and were replacing it with loose fur lined cloaks [*kaftan*], silk vests [*antari*], trousers [*shalvar*] and gowns made from thin gauze, and a variety of headgear instead of headscarfs.<sup>35</sup> For those women who preferred to veil, the use of gauze and of light colored material for veils made their appearance more colorful and exposed the shape of the body and the clothing underneath. While many Muslim women of the middle and lower

economic status continued to wear the traditional clothing and the veil that covered them from head to toe, upper-class ladies and palace women, together with non-Muslim women, showed much more freedom in their choice of style and in the adoption of European fashions, a trend that became stronger in the nineteenth century. But when this trend spread to the rest of society, minor changes in the style and color of clothing and the use of head gear by ordinary Muslim women provoked official surveillance. In Ottoman society, clothing was an important symbol of social rank and religious identity, and any violation of these boundaries created confusion among officials. Moreover, a Muslim woman was distinguished from a non-Muslim by her choice of modest clothing (*i.e.*, head and face cover) and the use of certain colors that were officially chosen for different *millets* (*i.e.*, green for Muslims).

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who spent some time in the Ottoman empire between 1717 and 1718, described the Ottoman costume worn by Turkish ladies in Edirne in a letter dated 1 April 1717 that she wrote to her sister in England. She does not make any mention of the traditional veil [*çarshaf*] and instead offers a description of the newly-adopted headdress that was not designed to be worn together with a veil:

The first piece of my dress is a pair of drawers, very full, that reach to my shoes and conceal the legs more modestly than your petticoats. They are of a thin, rose-colour damask brocaded with silver flowers, my shoes of white kid leather embroidered with gold. Over this hangs my smock of a fine white silk gauze edged with embroidery. This smock has wide sleeves hanging half way down the arm and is closed at the neck with a diamond button, but the shape and colour of the bosom very well to be distinguished through it. The *antery* is a waistcoat made close to the shape, of white and gold damask, with very long sleeves falling back and fringed with deep gold fringe, and should have diamond or pearl buttons. My *caftan* of the same stuff with my drawers is a robe exactly fitted to my shape and reaching to my feet, with very long straight falling sleeves. Over this is the girde of about four fingers broad, which all that can afford have entirely of diamonds or other precious stones. Those that will not be at the expense have it of exquisite embroidery on satin, but it must be fastened before with a clasp of diamonds. The *curdee* is a loose robe they throw off or put on according to the weather, being of a rich brocade (mine is green and gold) either lined with ermine or sables; the sleeves reach very little below the shoulders. The head-dress is



composed of a cap called *kalpack*, which is in winter of fine velvet embroidered with pearls or diamonds and in summer of a light, shining silver stuff. This is fixed on one side of the head, hanging a little way down with a gold tassel and bound on either with a circle of diamonds (as I have seen several) or a rich embroidered handkerchief.<sup>36</sup>

The miniature paintings of Levni, an Ottoman artist and palace painter during the reign of Ahmed III (1703–30), portray women in their colorful costumes that parallel Lady Montagu's description.<sup>37</sup> In these paintings, it is apparent that the more simple and provincial style was already giving way to a more elaborate and colorful outfit worn by the women of the palace. For example, later in the century, the use of low necklines and thin gauze-like material over the face and the body made the face, breasts, and arms more visible. In the late nineteenth century, drawers were abandoned and were replaced by more elaborate dresses. Pastel colors such as rose, red, and greens became more in vogue and the headdress became more European in shape and decoration. The rich and fancy outfits worn by the wealthy ladies who could afford the expensive velvets and brocade silk stuff were a far cry from the more conservative traditional outfits for women that aimed at enhancing modesty and underplaying female sexuality. Nevertheless, there was a great deal of continuity and conservatism in appearance among the great majority of Ottoman women in Istanbul, who used the veil in public to cover from head to toe. But, at times, the veil was also used to disguise the identity of those women who looked for adventure. In the same letter addressed to her sister, Lady Montagu goes on to express her surprise at how liberal the Turkish ladies were in their social interactions.

As to their morality or good conduct, I can say like Harlequin, 'tis just as 'tis with you'; and the Turkish ladies don't commit one sin the less for not being Christians. Now I am a little acquainted with their ways, I cannot forbear admiring either the exemplary discretion or extreme stupidity of all the writers that have given accounts of 'em. 'Tis very easy to see they have in reality more liberty than we have, no woman of what rank soever, being permitted to go in the streets without two muslins, one that covers her face all but her eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head and hangs half way down her back; and their shapes are wholly concealed by a thing they call *ferigée*, which no woman of any sort appears without. This has straight sleeves that reach to their fingers' ends and it laps all

around 'em, not unlike a riding-hood.... You may guess how effectively this disguises them, that there is no distinguishing the great lady from her slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her, and no man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street.

This perpetual masquerade gives them entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery. The most usual method of intrigue is to send an appointment to the lover to meet the lady at a Jew's shop, which are as notoriously convenient as our Indian-houses.... The great ladies seldom let their gallants know who they are, and 'tis so difficult to find it out that they can very seldom guess at her name they have corresponded with above half a year together.... Upon the whole, I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the empire.<sup>38</sup>

One may object to any generalizations based on such limited information since even a keen European observer had little access to upper-class ladies. But Ottoman legal records of the period also confirm some changes in the social and sexual mores of the time. The number of lawsuits and petitions by members of the Muslim community against sexual transgressions by Muslim men and women in Istanbul had increased considerably.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, official edicts did not remain restricted to the definition of the dress code alone, but aimed to impose control on women's public and private conduct. Migrant, single, widowed, and divorced women were put on a particularly sensitive standing in their respective communities. Under certain circumstances, the absence of male supervision in their households made the whole community responsible and accountable for their conduct. For example, during the first quarter of the eighteenth century women were required to obtain official permission to travel on business or to visit relatives.<sup>40</sup> Further research is needed to ascertain whether these laws were issued due to special circumstances (*i.e.*, insecurity, wartime, plague, or overpopulation) or whether they were binding for all times and places.

At times, the whole neighborhood led by the local religious authorities, the *imām* and the *müezzin*, took action against women who were judged morally lax and lacking in social propriety. The *kadi's* court received many such complaints during the eighteenth century. The following cases examine circumstances under which women were seen to be acting in defiance of social norms.

## A PETITION

In reference to the imperial order issued in response to a petition presented to our stirrup, we have sent an executive order to Huseyin Pasha, our official agent, to call in the aforementioned and known Hadice bint Abu Bakr to the *shari'a* court. In the petition, the circumstances of Hadice have been investigated and reported according to Imam 'Abdi Efendi and the residents of the quarter of Debbağ Yunus, Müezzın al-Hac Ahmed, Hatib Mehmed Efendi, Za'im Ömer Agha, Mulla Mehmed the egg seller, Hüseyin Beshe, Ömer Beshe the pistol-seller, Hafız and Isma'il Efendi, Ibrahim Efendi, Ali Agha the musketeer, al-Hac Hasan, Mulla Ömer the guardian, Hafız Salih Eefendi, Za'im Mustafa Agha, Ibrahim Çavush, al-Hac Qasim, Hafız Mulla Ibrahim, al-Hac 'Ali the nut-seller, 'Ali bin 'Osman Agha, Za'im Halil Agha, etc. They have reported and confirmed that the aforementioned Hadice and her daughter, Fatma bint Fayzullah, who is absent, have been residing in the aforesaid quarter. They have failed to keep to their own and have behaved improperly, causing disturbance to the residents. They have also failed to avoid strange men and have been mingling with unrelated (*namahram*) and dubious people who have been entering into their house. The residents have each testified and expressed their discomfort on account of their [the women's] sharp tongue and illicit behavior which is contrary to the *shari'a*. We have issued this order to you to stop this and to expel them from the neighborhood. (28 Sha'ban 1181/July 1767)<sup>41</sup>

This complaint and the subsequent investigation were initiated by the male residents of the quarter; female witnesses or petitioners were absent.<sup>42</sup> The testimony of women was not treated equally to that of men. The protection of honor was also a male prerogative. Therefore, women did not show much sensitivity to these issues except at times when they intentionally spread rumors against women whom they disliked. They may have also shown some sympathy for someone like Fatma, who was possibly widowed or divorced. Perhaps the women of the neighborhood gathered at Fatma's house to get away from the burdens of family life, which provided ample excuse for men to start worrying about their own wives. The following petition involved both men and women of questionable repute. It was presented under similar circumstances by the residents of Edirne-gate on 10 Sha'ban 1181/ July 1767.

## A PETITION

The residents of the quarter of Neslishah Sultan in Edirne Kapısı in Istanbul, Imam Hafiz Mehmed Emin, Müezzın Mehmed Efendi, Salih Efendi, al-Hac 'Ali, al-Hac Halil, al-Hac Ibrahim, Mehmed Agha, Ahmed, Mehmed Beshe, Mehmed, al-Hac Isma'il, Mustafa Agha, Seyyid Ibrahim, Müteveli al-Hac Ahmed, 'Ali Usta, and others have presented this petition to the *sharī'a* court against Seyyid Ali bin Hüseyin. They have complained that Seyyid 'Ali, who owns a large house with several rooms and a garden, has changed the set-up of the house contrary to the regulations and has, furthermore, partitioned the rooms with wooden stands. He has rented those five or six rooms to prostitutes, and has himself been residing in a separate house he built on the same estate. The aforesaid Ali has caused a great deal of discomfort by his conduct; they have therefore demanded that he restores the house to its old setup. The aforementioned Ali has agreed to restore the house to three rooms and leave the neighborhood on his own initiative. The *imām* has accepted his pledge and has agreed to report the complaints to the *kapı kethüdası*, al-Hac Salih.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike the previous petition, this petition was not against the women who were renting from Seyyid Ali. Nor is there a demand for their punishment or expulsion. One reason may be that these women may not have been Muslims and were seen as providing an essential service. They may have been Gypsies since the Edirne-gate is located next to the city walls close to the Jewish quarter of Balat and Sulu Kule where Armenians and Gypsies resided. The guilty party was the owner of the house who was accused of setting up a brothel in a Muslim residential quarter. The petition is presented by the Muslim residents against a dubious character who had established a disreputable business for which he was held responsible. The punishment demanded by the residents involved the expulsion of the man and women but did not result in harsher measures, *i.e.*, public stoning or whipping, as demanded by the *sharī'a*. This could have been due to the fact that this quarter was located on the edge of the city and that its marginal social structure gave its residents a more tolerant attitude. This might not have been true in a more conservative district like Eyyub. For example, in another petition presented by the residents of Istanbul in 22 Şevval 1181/ February 1767, we learn that a certain 'Abdi from Kirtal village had been accused of operating a brothel and had been sent to the galleys. The petition asked for an official pardon on behalf of 'Abdi.<sup>44</sup>

The relative tolerance of Istanbul residents and government officials is also reflected in another petition by the inhabitants of Hayreddin quarter in the same year. They demanded official permission for the return and residency of Hadice Hatun who was banished to Bursa for three years on account of her improper moral conduct. The residents led by the *imām* felt confident enough to pledge that Hadice Hatun had revised and corrected her moral standing and deserved a pardon to return to her house in Istanbul. From this case, we learn that women of questionable repute and moral conduct were expelled and banished to other locations where they might have relatives until they gave up their undesirable habits.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the same neighbors who asked for their departure could also request an official pardon and take upon themselves the responsibility of the accused men and women. The accusations remained very general and almost formulaic, *i.e.*, 'sharp tongued,' 'discomforting,' 'disturbing,' 'interacting with strange men,' *etc.* They never defined the behavior as adultery or prostitution although the implications were clear. The *sharī'a* required four witnesses for legal cases that involved an accusation of adultery by men or women. Slander was often treated as an equally punishable offense as the actual accusation. This could be one explanation for the fact that very few lawsuits for adultery ended up in the courts. Sometimes, families took the law into their own hands since the legal penalty was viewed as being too light. But the frequency of crimes of passion can not be ascertained from the records. The *kadis* showed more sensitivity to false accusations and the presence of witnesses. Lady Montagu once again offers a vivid description of one such incident which she witnessed in Istanbul.

...and you may believe me that the Turkish ladies have at least as much wit and civility, nay, liberty, as ladies amongst us. 'Tis true the same customs that give them so many opportunities of gratifying their evil inclinations (if they have any) also put it very fully in the power of their husbands to revenge them if they are discovered, and I don't doubt but they suffer sometimes for their indiscretions in a very severe manner. About two months ago there was found at day break not very far from my house the bleeding body of a young woman, naked, only wrapped in a coarse sheet, with two wounds of a knife, one in her side, and another in her breast. She was not yet quite cold, and so surprisingly beautiful that there were very few men in Pera that did not go to look upon her, but it was not possible

for anybody to know her, no woman's face being known. She was supposed be brought in dead of night from the Constantinople side and laid there. Very little enquiry was made about the murderer, and the corpse privately buried without noise. Murder is never pursued by the King's officers as with us. 'Tis the business of the next relations to revenge the dead person; and if they like to compound the matter with money (as they generally do) there is no more said of it.<sup>46</sup>

The legal protection offered by the *shari'a* for women suspected or accused of adultery did not always save their lives. As attested by Lady Montagu, the Islamic courts in these instances did not order an investigation unless there was a formal lawsuit by the relatives of the murdered woman. But usually, both sides kept quiet and avoided the courts and the hassle of providing at least four witnesses. In the absence of formal evidence, it is difficult to assess the frequency of this type of crime involving women in general. But as Lady Montagu noted, this was more prevalent among the Muslim population of the district of Istanbul. The following report from the *kadi's* daily register is about the mysterious circumstances of the murder of a woman, Hadice bt. 'Abdullah, in Istanbul, dating from 19 Şevval 1182/February 1768.

#### A PETITION

In accordance with the imperial order, the scribe Mustafa Efendi and 'Abdi Beshe, the Kethuda of the Sublime Porte, have presented the following report upon their arrival to Shahsevar Beg quarter in Kadirgha Limanı in Istanbul: Upon the disappearance of Hadice bint 'Abdullah, they together with the *imam*, the *mü'ezzin*, and thirty residents and three...have broken into her house and have discovered her buried body behind the kitchen in the basement of her house. Upon the examination of her body parts by the body washers, Hanife bint 'Abdullah, Um Kolsum bint 'Ömer, Rabi'a bint 'Ömer, etc., they have reported that she was knifed on the right side of her throat which is tied with a cloth and on her right arm. Further more, she was stabbed on her chest. The aforementioned scribe has written down this report and has submitted it to the *kadi's* court.<sup>47</sup>

This report makes it clear that Hadice was murdered by a man in a very mysterious and tragic manner. Since her husband's name is not mentioned, we can assume that she was divorced or widowed. Hadice also lived alone, which is another interesting departure from the social norms governing women's lives. Since we do not know her age, marital status, or social background, it is almost impossible

to make any assumptions as to the cause of her murder. Since no witnesses were present, nor was there a formal lawsuit by relatives, no further investigation was carried out. But one may safely guess that Hadice was murdered by a boyfriend who planned the whole thing and then buried her so that her body would not be discovered. A husband would be the first suspect if he had existed. If she had been murdered by a thief who had broken into her house, her body would not have been buried. But the crime was taken seriously and a report was made based on a pathological examination. This case illustrates that women who lived alone were vulnerable and that in a big city like Istanbul they were also prime targets for violence. The rate of crime in Istanbul was obviously much higher than in other cities in the empire. Perhaps the growing violence against women, in particular, prompted the government to issue bans on their public appearance. Certainly, the authorities saw a link between crime, drinking, and intermingling of the sexes.

Government edicts on women's freedom of movement and dress code were followed by bans on the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverage by Muslim men. The complaints of Muslim residents against their Christian and Jewish neighbors who operated taverns often resulted in their closure and in government bans on the consumption of wine. The following imperial edict, dating from Rebiyülevvel 1144/September 1731, clarifies this point:

An order to the Naib [deputy judge], Voyvoda [governor], Serdar [military chief], Subaşı [police magistrate], and port inspectors of Ergli, Tekfurdağ, Şehir Köyü, and Gelibolu, We have ordered the closing of taverns in Galata, Istanbul, and other quarters. But from your districts where the sinful wine is being produced and lawfully supplied from the ports to the foreign embassies resident in Galata, some is also being illegally sold to others. From now on, it is forbidden for the Jews and *dhimmis* to load wine and *arak* onto boats. Those who violate this order will receive due punishment. We issued this imperial order to you to act accordingly and to prevent and punish those who act contrary to our order.<sup>48</sup>

Three months later, in Recep 1143/ December 1731, following the order for the closure of taverns, a group of Jewish residents from Istanbul presented a petition and pledged themselves not to sell intoxicating beverages to those outside their community (*i.e.*, Muslims). They also asked to be given permission to deliver ten

thousand *medre* of wine to houses in their own community, upon which the request was accepted.<sup>49</sup> The supply of alcoholic beverages to Muslims continued despite numerous prohibitions. In Cemaziyelevvel 1159/March 1746, another imperial order was issued to the *bostancı başı* [market inspector] of Istanbul to restrict the supply of wine to European embassies and their translators to limited quantities once a year. Taverns in Galata and in Pera, however, continued serving a mixed clientele, including the very government authorities in charge of inspection. And Muslim residents kept presenting petitions about the disruptive influence of drunkards on their community. Despite numerous government decrees and bans, the legal authorities failed to apply more severe punishments and often closed their eyes to what was happening. Otherwise, the number of lawsuits would have certainly exceeded the capacity of the courts to deal with problems of moral conduct and would have increased the level of coercion the government was willing to use against women and the minorities. The softening of attitudes and sexual mores had a positive impact on the growing public freedom of women in the Ottoman capital that, in the long run, helped enhance further their social and economic standing.

#### NOTES

1. An exception must be made of the works of the following authors: Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem, Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Abraham Marcus, "Men, Women, and Property: Dealers in Real Estate in 18th Century Aleppo," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 26 (1983): 137–63; Ronald Jennings, "Women in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records—the Shari‘a Court of Anatolian Kayseri," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 53–114; *idem*, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World, 1571–1640* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 14–40. See also the author's, "Women, Law, and Imperial Justice in Ottoman Istanbul During the Late 17th Century," in Amira Sonbol (ed.) *Women and Divorce Laws in Islamic Society* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming). With the exception of Peirce's work, most studies are limited to articles and at best sub-chapters in larger studies on urban history. This article is part of a project and an upcoming monograph on the history of Ottoman women in eighteenth-century Istanbul that has been funded by a post-doctoral grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Research Institute in Turkey. I would like to express my thanks



to these foundations, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, the Müftülük Archives, the Süleymaniye Library, and to Mehmet Genç for access to *sicill* records and the permission to conduct research in their collections.

2. For a recent critique of the historiography of decline see, Rifâ'at 'Ali Abou-Al-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991).

3. For a classical exposé of this type of scholarship see, Uriel Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law*, ed. V.L. Ménage (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

4. Haim Gerber, *State, Society, and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 179.

5. I would like to express my thanks to Huri İslamoğlu-Inan for bringing this important point to my attention during our extensive discussions in Ankara.

6. Gerber, *State, Society, and Law in Islam*, p. 181.

7. John L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1982), pp. 13-48.

8. "Women and the tradition of seeking justice in the Ottoman empire," in a volume on Ottoman women to be edited by Madeline Zilfi.

9. Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), pp. 129-235.

10. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, pp. 202-05; See also Colin Imber, "Zinâ in Ottoman Law," in J-L. Bacqué-Grammont and P. Dumont, eds. *Collections Turcica III: Contributions à l'histoire économique et sociale de l'Empire Ottomane* (Louvain: Editions Peeters, 1983), pp. 59-92.

11. A.J. Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: McMillan, 1973), vol. 2, p. 50.

12. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. 2, p. 46.

13. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. 2, p. 46.

14. M. Ertugrul Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislam Ebussuûd Efendi fetvaları ışığında 16. asir Türk hayatı* (Istanbul: Beyazıt Enderun Kitabevi, 1972), pp. 157-58.

15. Düzdağ, *Fetvaları*, p. 159.

16. Ömer Lutfi Barkan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ziraî Ekonominin Hukukî ve Mali Esasları* (Istanbul: Bürhaneddin matbaası, 1943), pp. 119-29; Heyd, pp. 56-103.

17. For an excellent anthropological study of rural women in contemporary Iran, see Erika Freidl, *The Women of Deh Koh* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989).

18. On these edicts see Ahmed Refik's multi-volume work *Onikinci Asr-i hicri'de İstanbul Hayatı* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1988).

19. Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1982), p. 240. See also, Tülay Artan, "The Kadırga palace: An architectural reconstruction," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 205.

20. T. Artan, "The Palaces of the Sultanas," *Istanbul dergisi* (January 1993): 88.

21. Artan, "The Palaces of the Sultanas," p. 89.

22. Artan, "The Palaces of the Sultanas," pp. 90–91. See also, by the same author, "From Charismatic Leadership to Collective Rule, Introducing Materials from the Wealth and Power of Ottoman Princesses in the Eighteenth Century," *Toplum ve Ekonomi* (April 1993).

23. For detailed maps of Istanbul see, Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1962).

24. According to Inalcik, in the 1833 census, numbered at 50,343 Greek Orthodox males. Halil Inalcik, s.v. "Istanbul," *EI*(2), vol. 4, p. 241.

25. *EI*(2), vol. 4, p. 231. See also the plan of Istanbul in this article. According to Inalcik, Istanbul comprised 253 Muslim and 24 non-Muslim mahalles by 1672. *EI*(2), vol. 4, p. 234.

26. *EI*(2), vol. 4, pp. 243–44.

27. Mantran, *Istanbul*, p. 47.

28. *EI*(2), vol. 4, p. 237.

29. Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households, Marriage, Family, and Fertility 1880–1940* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

30. *EI*(2), vol. 4, p. 229.

31. *EI*(2), vol. 4, p. 233.

32. *EI*(2), vol. 4, p. 233.

33. I am engaged in a detailed study of the *waqfs* founded by Ottoman women in Istanbul during the eighteenth century.

34. Refik, *Onikinci Asr-i*, pp. 86–88.

35. See, for example, the *terekes* [estates] of Ottoman women in the *sicill* records of Istanbul (*sicills* 1/18, 1/27, 1/25, 2/126) and *Trabzon* (*sicill* 1972) in the Müftüllük Archives in Istanbul and the Milli Kütüphane in Ankara.

36. Dervla Murphy, ed., *Embassy to Constantinople: Letters of Lady Mary Wortley* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1988) pp. 108–109.

37. *Anadolu Kadının 9000 Yılı (9000 Years of Anatolian Women)* (Istanbul: Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture General Directorate of Monuments and Museums, 1994).

38. Murphy, *Embassy to Constantinople*, p. 111.

39. A statistical analysis and comparison with previous centuries will be carried out by the present author.

40. See the petitions of Emine, Fatma, and Salihe from Istanbul in Başbakanlık Archives, Istanbul, Şikayet Defteri, vol. 102: 152, 534 and vol. 123: 340 for the years 1725 and 1730.

41. Müftülük Archives, Istanbul, *Sicill* 1/30, folio 2b. All translations those of the author.

42. While women were very active in bringing lawsuits to the court, they seldom were listed as witnesses. According to the *sharī'a*, the testimony of women was valid but was considered less acceptable (by one half) than that of men.

43. Müftülük Archives, folio 4a. Author's translation.
44. Müftülük Archives, folio 8b. Author's translation.
45. Müftülük Archives, folio 8b. Author's translation.
46. Murphy, *Embassy to Constantinople*, p. 191.
47. Müftülük Archives, *Sicill* 1/32:5.
48. Refik, *Onikinci Asr-i*, p. 119.
49. Refik, *Onikinci Asr-i*, p. 121.

THE 'JEWELS OF WONDER':  
LEARNED LADIES AND PRINCESS  
POLITICIANS IN THE PROVINCES OF  
EARLY ŞAFAVID IRAN

*Maria Szuppe*

*Based on contemporary sources, this essay presents some new data on the participation of royal and urban elite women in public and literary life in early sixteenth-century Iran.*

In Şafavid history (907–1135/1501–1722), the primary sources in Persian do not pay much attention to women and the part they occupied on the social as well as the political scene. The conventional treatment of history by Muslim historiographers avoids bringing women into the limelight. It cannot, however, eliminate them altogether, and, when the rather fragmentary information is put together, Şafavid women often do emerge with unexpected force.<sup>1</sup>

While seventeenth and eighteenth century accounts of European travellers provide some information on women, especially on the royal harem, there are very few such European sources for the sixteenth century. Therefore, for the early Şafavid period we must rely almost exclusively on contemporary Persian writings, notorious for their scarcity of data on women. These sources are mainly court and local chronicles, collections of biographies, and some archival documents.<sup>2</sup> They supply information principally on women from the royal and political elite circles and on their activities in various fields of public life, not only at the central court but also—as it will be demonstrated below—in the provinces and marches of the Şafavid state.

## FEMALE POETS OF POST-TIMŪRID KHURASAN (EASTERN IRAN)

In the early sixteenth century, Herat, the capital of the Tīmūrīds, which had fallen to the Ūzbegs in 1507 and to the Ṣafavids in 1510, remained, during the first half of the century, the focal point of Irano-Tīmūrīd culture and an ideal model of social lifestyle. In Khurasan, and especially in Herat, the Tīmūrīd culture survived well into the Ṣafavid period, even if on a fairly modest level, due to the generally negligent attitude of the first Ṣafavid military governors towards the question of arts, culture, and patronage.<sup>3</sup>

In this context, a rare collection of biographies of poetesses and learned women written in the middle of the sixteenth century by Sulṭān-Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Amīrī, known as Fakh̄rī of Herat, and entitled the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib* [The Jewels of Wonder] appears as an important primary source for the social and cultural history of eastern Iran. Entirely devoted to famous women, it furnishes much valuable information on society in late Tīmūrīd and early Ṣafavid Khurasan, and especially on the position of women and their participation in intellectual life.<sup>4</sup>

Fakh̄rī flourished under the first two Ṣafavid Shāhs, Ismā'īl I (r. 907–30/1501–24) and Ṭahmāsp (r. 930–84/1524–76). Although he used to dedicate his works to Shāh Ismā'īl I and the Ṣafavid vizier of Khurasan Ḥabībullāh Sāvajī (d. 1526), and to write panegyrics to Shāh Ṭahmāsp, he was nostalgic for the Tīmūrīds and an admirer of the literary talent of Mīr 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī (d. 1501).<sup>5</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, in search of the bygone Tīmūrīd intellectual atmosphere and generous court patronage, he finally left Herat at an uncertain date during the reign of Shāh Ṭahmāsp and settled in Sind at the court of the Arghūnīds, a dynasty descended from a celebrated *amīr* of the last Tīmūrīds of Herat, Dhu'l-Nūn Arghūn (d. 913/1507). There, Fakh̄rī composed not only a collection of biographies of poet *amīrs* and rulers, the *Rawḍat al-salāṭīn*, but also the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib*, a literary 'curiosity' based mostly on his personal observation, which he dedicated to the most influential lady of the Mughal court of India, Māham (d. 1562), the nurse of the Emperor Akbar (r. 963–1014/1556–1605).<sup>6</sup>

Apart from being an anthology of about twenty women poets (the number of entries depending on the manuscript of the text) quoting some of their verses, the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib* is an important primary source for the social history of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It provides information on educated women

from the upper urban milieu, that is the literary, administrative, religious, and political elites of Khurasan. It also suggests the continuity of women's participation in intellectual and social activities, sometimes in mixed society, throughout the Tīmūrid period,<sup>7</sup> during the Üzbeg period,<sup>8</sup> and, apparently on a much lesser level, in the first years of the Şafavid domination in Khurasan. It is at present difficult to ascertain whether the scarcity of information on female intellectuals of the Şafavid period in Herat is due to well-known peculiarities of the change of regime (including the imposition of Twelver Shī'ism), or to Fakhri's later departure from Herat.

The social origins of the women appearing in the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib*, most of whom are known to us only by their pen names [*rakhalluṣ*], are to be found among the upper urban society, both of the Iranian and of a recently settled Čaghatāy Turkish (Tīmūrid) population. Most of them seem to have lived and worked during the reign of the last significant Tīmūrid ruler of Herat, Sulţān-Ĥusayn Bāyqarā (d. 912/1506). However, a closer reading makes it clear that many were still active in the following years, that is under Üzbeg (1507–10)<sup>9</sup> and then Şafavid rule in Herat (from 1510 onwards).<sup>10</sup>

Many came from noble and intellectual families of Khurasan and the provinces of north- and south-eastern Iran, including Gurgān and Kīrman, which had settled in Herat. In a number of cases, several members (male and female) and more than one generation of a family were engaged in intellectual activities. Jamālī, who wrote *ghazals*, was a daughter of Mawlānā Hilālī (d. 1529–30), a celebrated poet of Herat.<sup>11</sup> Another poetess, *Ĥayāt(i)*, also known as *Ātūn* or *Bībī Ātūn*, was descended from a famous *şūfī* thinker and poet of the fifteenth century, *Şhaykh Ādharī*. She was married to a poet called Mawlānā Baqā'ī, who is described by Taqī Awḥadī simply as "the husband of Bībī Ātūn."<sup>12</sup> Bīdilī was the wife of *Şhaykh 'Abdullāh Dīvāna b. Khwāja Ḥakīm* and the mother of *Şhaykhzādā Anşārī*. Bīdilī and her husband were known for their poetical exchanges [*javāb*]; their son was an expert in composing and resolving *mu'ammā*, intricate rhymed word-puzzles.<sup>13</sup> The father of *Şhaykh 'Abdullāh Dīvāna* might have been the same *Khwāja Ḥakīm* or *Khwāja 'Abd al-'Aziz Ḥakīm* who, in the middle of the fifteenth century, was married to Mihri, a well-known poetess from the

entourage of Gawhar-Shād Begam, wife of the Tīmūrid Shāh-Rukh.<sup>14</sup>

Women from the families of high administrative and religious circles were also among the intellectual elite of the period. Nihānī, a learned lady [*fāḍila*] and a good poet, was a sister of Khwāja Afḍal [Khwāja Faḍlullāh], a vizier of Sulṭān-Ḥusayn Bāyqarā.<sup>15</sup> Fakhr al-Nisā', known as Nisā'ī, who wrote *ghazals*, was descended from a *ṣayyid* family of Zāva and Dūghābād districts of Khurasan.<sup>16</sup> Another lady, Shāh-Mulk, known as Ṣayyid(a) Begam or Begam-Shā'ir, was a daughter of a *ṣayyid* named Ḥasan Kār-Kīyā from Gurgān (Astarābād).<sup>17</sup> Still another woman, whose name is spelled T.r.v.i. (Terevvi?) and who was a Turk from Maymāna, was a relative of Mawlānā Āhī.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, others belonged to the military aristocracy of the late Tīmūrid period. Among them was Āfaq Begam (Āpāq Begam) Jalāyir (d. after 1528), daughter and sister of the renowned Jalāyir *amīrs*, and wife of a brother of Mīr 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī.<sup>19</sup> Bībī 'Iṣmatī, a native of the district of Khwāf in Khurasan, was a sister of a military governor [*hākīm*] of the place.<sup>20</sup>

There is not much information about the financial situation and means of the women themselves, but it is known that Jamālī's father, Hilālī, was famous in Herat for his great riches.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, a lady called Bija (or Bega?) Munajjima, who was a widow, had enough means to have founded a *ḥammām*, a *madrasa*, and even a mosque.<sup>22</sup> Āfaq Begam Jalāyir, whose poetry was celebrated in the province of Herat and considered superior to that of her brother Muḥammad, was a rich person, owning numerous cattle, sheep, horses, camels, gardens, and shops.<sup>23</sup> She was a patron of secular scholars and poets, to whom she paid salaries in grain [*ghalla*]; among the people attached to her was Khwāja Āṣifi (d. 1515).<sup>24</sup>

Learned women of the early sixteenth century were composing and writing in Persian as well as, at least some of them, in Čaghatāy Turkish.<sup>25</sup> The *Divān* of Ṣayyid(a) Begam was read by Fakhrī who considered it "good."<sup>26</sup> The lady poets evidently mastered classical poetical forms, like quatrain [*rubā'ī*], *ghazal*, or *qaṣida*. Specimens of their verses are quoted in Fakhrī's text, as well as, for several of them, in some later general collections of biographies. But also, they seem to have been expert in more difficult poetical techniques:

a later tradition says that one poetess was known for her mastery of the art of particular meters and rhymes, *'ilm-i 'arūd va qavāfi*.<sup>27</sup>

The *Ḥavāhir al-'Ajāyib* sheds light on the fact that these women had an unexpectedly wide access to many spheres of intellectual and social activity. These included contacts within the intellectual community, such as literary exchanges, rivalries, and public recitations in association with princely courts, especially those of the Tīmūrids and the Ūzbegs. Thus, Āfāq Begam recited her verses at the court of Badī' al-Zamān Mīrzā (d. 1514), son of Sultān-Ḥusayn Bāyqarā. She was also known for having made a pledge [*tawba*] not to drink wine.<sup>28</sup> Ḥayāt (Ātūn) and her husband, Mawlānā Baqā'i, both became court poets of the Ūzbeq 'Ubayd Allāh Khān (d. 1540) and part of his intimate circle.<sup>29</sup> They may have even followed the khan from Herat to Bukhara.

An important figure among the learned women of the period, *Bija Munajjima* was a perfect female counterpart to a typical Herati intellectual of the age. She was a well-known mystic [*'ārifā*] and above all an expert in astrology-astronomy [*'ulūm-i nujūm*]. She was especially praised for her ability in calculating calendars, a skill which implies, among other things, a knowledge of advanced mathematics. In addition, she also wrote "quite good" verses. *Bija Munajjima* was also known in Herat for her bitter rivalry with the renowned *ṣūfi* thinker and poet, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), to whom she considered herself an equal in literary creation and religious charity.<sup>30</sup>

#### FEMALE LITERACY IN THE EARLY ŠAFAVID PERIOD

There is no special mention by *Fakhri*, or by other sources, of women poets at the Šafavid court in Herat, or elsewhere, during this period. However, this apparent lack of artistic and learned women in the early Šafavid period may be only relative.

Since the beginning of the Šafavid period, the art of reading and writing, calligraphy, and composing letters was common among the women of the court, who used it for personal correspondence as well as for diplomatic activities, as in the case of Tājlū Khānūm (d. 1540), chief wife of Shāh Ismā'il I, and some other members of the Šafavid family.<sup>31</sup> The princess Mahīn Bānū, better known as Shāhzādā Sultānūm (d. 1562), daughter of Shāh Ismā'il I and Tājlū Khānūm, was given specifically named teachers, all of them distinguished masters, with whom she learned Persian grammar and studied the Qur'ān and calligraphy.<sup>32</sup> It is probable, but not certain,



that Shāhzādā Sulṭānūm was also taught painting; in any case she was an accomplished calligrapher and specimens of her handwriting survive to the present day.<sup>33</sup> Several daughters of Shāh Ṭahmāsp were considered by their contemporaries as especially learned. Among them, Gawhar-Sulṭān Khānūm (d. 1577) who was married to her cousin, the famous Ṣafavid patron of the arts and the governor of Mashhad Sulṭān-Ibrāhīm Mīrzā (d. 1577), was praised for her piety and learning. One of the stories about her says that after the execution of her husband she wrote an introduction to a volume in which she assembled poems composed by him.<sup>34</sup>

It should also be noticed that a person called Nihānī is quoted in the late seventeenth century as a poetess in the service of the mother of Shāh Sulaymān (r. 1077–1105/1666–94). Her father was one of the grand *amīrs* of the Shāh.<sup>35</sup> This Nihānī, who was very beautiful, is said to have written a quatrain, which she hung at the [Isfahan?] bazaar crossroads, proclaiming that she would marry the person who would be skilled enough to write a *javāb* to her verses. According to the story, not one of the poets of her time was able to take up the challenge.<sup>36</sup> A somewhat isolated piece of information by Chardin suggests that women did continue to be knowledgeable in many fields under the later Ṣafavids. According to him, during the period of Shāh ‘Abbās I (r. 996–1038/1587–1628), both the father and mother of a court physician to Shāh Ṣafī (r. 1038–52/1628–48), Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, were practising medicine at the court.<sup>37</sup>

✧ While education above elementary level was the rule among the Ṣafavid elites, it was rather exceptional, although not actively discouraged, among the poor. One of the many charitable deeds attributed to Shāh Ṭahmāsp was the creation of educational institutions for forty orphan boys and forty orphan girls in many cities of Iran, especially, as the chronicler Iskandar Beg observes, where Shī‘ism was particularly strong, that is: Mashhad, Sabzavār, Astarābād, Qum, Kāshān, Yazd, Tabrīz, and Ardabīl; in such places, girls were taught by female teachers [*mu‘allima*].<sup>38</sup> Among the Herat poetesses quoted by Fakhrī and by Navā‘ī there are pen names such as Ātūn(i) and Muqriya, suggest teaching or Qur‘ān reading activities.<sup>39</sup>

The lack of documentation, already mentioned above, could be due to the fact that, first, female artists and literati were certainly rather few, and second, there is, to our knowledge, no source

comparable to the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib* for the later Ṣafavid period. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib*, with its exclusive devotion to women, must have appeared an exceptional literary work, indeed a 'curiosity.'<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, famous women were sporadically quoted in general collections of biographies. In the Tīmūrid period, Dawlatshāh quotes two, and Navā'ī five, of the poetesses who were later listed by Fakhri.<sup>41</sup> More important, in the early seventeenth century, Taqī Awḥadī quoted Fakhri's work as a source for his *Tadhkira-i 'arafāt al-'āshiqīn*, a major biographical work, where seven of the poetesses of early sixteenth century Khurasan are listed in addition to some others<sup>42</sup>. A Mughal source from the seventeenth century, *Mir'āt al-khīyāl*, by Shīr-Khān Lōdī, quotes fifteen poetesses, eight of whom had already appeared in the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib*.<sup>43</sup> Finally, the main post-Ṣafavid *tadhkira*, the *Ātashkāda*, by Ādhar, contains a chapter on female poets covering the period from the twelfth to the eighteenth century: there are eight names in total, four of which had already been quoted by Fakhri (see Appendix 1).<sup>44</sup>

Although undoubtedly the Ṣafavid royal women were given education, they do not appear in the available sources as accomplished artists or authors, while during the same period, the Mughal court in India, the most direct heir to the Irano-Tīmūrid tradition, produced female writers, poets, and artists.<sup>45</sup> However, Ṣafavid royal women appear very active in another field, that of politics.

#### POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF ṢAFAVID WOMEN

Education and financial independence<sup>46</sup> enabled women of the Ṣafavid elite to acquire intellectual tools for addressing not only literary or scholarly questions, but also, and above all, political problems and state matters. Several Ṣafavid princesses and spouses were politically active in the sixteenth century. Among them were Tājilū Khānūm and Shāhzādā Sulṭānūm, respectively mother and unmarried sister of Shāh Ṭahmāsp, Pārī-Khān Khānūm II (d. 1578), unmarried daughter of Shāh Ṭahmāsp, Khayr al-Nisā' Begam (d. 1579), wife of Shāh Muḥammad Khudābanda, and some others.<sup>47</sup> At the royal court, these ladies participated, to different degrees, in the conduct of state matters and were involved in political, administrative, and sometimes military decision-making.

The female politician was a powerful, although certainly not unique, rôle-model within the Şafavid family itself, as well as among the ladies of the Şafavid military elite of predominantly Turkoman origin, that is the Qizilbāsh. Shāhzādā Sulţānūm replaced her own mother, Tājilū Khānūm, in the rôle of Shāh Ṭahmāsp's counsellor and confidante. Her influence was very strong and she accompanied the Shāh on official occasions, including royal hunting trips.<sup>48</sup> In the later generation, Parī-Khān Khānūm II aspired to a position of influence next to her brother Shāh Ismā'īl II (r. 984–85/1576–78), which would equal and surpass the one that Shāhzādā Sulţānūm had held at Ṭahmāsp's court. The Iranian spouse of Shāh Muḥammad Khudābanda (r. 985–96/1578–88), Khayr al-Nisā' Begam of Māzandarān, ruled the state for about seventeen months practically on her own, while the Shāh, disabled by an eye-illness, withdrew to his religious preoccupations. She did not only control the central and provincial administration through the grand vizier Mīrzā Salmān<sup>49</sup> and through her own followers and Māzandarānī relations, but she also opposed, unsuccessfully, the political influence of the Qizilbāsh *amīrs*. Khayr al-Nisā' Begam's power can be measured by the fact that she actually commanded the Şafavid royal army in war. During the campaign against the Ottomans in the winter of 1578–79, she was present at the war council of the Qizilbāsh *amīrs* where she argued for and imposed military decisions.<sup>50</sup> It is noteworthy that there are more examples from the Qizilbāsh-Şafavid milieu of ladies actively participating in military campaigns.<sup>51</sup>

While the Şafavid royal court is evidently the best studied, the same phenomenon of politically active royal women can be observed elsewhere in Iran during the early Şafavid period. The data, although scarce and fragmentary, is interesting because, in showing a glimpse of social realities, it confirms that, under some conditions, women could obtain a wider access to the political scene. The available information is chiefly concerned with the frontier provinces which the Şafavids aimed at dominating, such as Shīrvān and Shakkī, Gilān and Māzandarān. The ladies whose activity can thus be observed were, on the one hand, Şafavid princesses married off to local rulers, who obviously acted in order to promote Şafavid interests and, on the other, Iranian women from local ruling families. The activities of the latter can be regarded in relation to the internal politics of their local states, as well as in relation to Şafavid politics.

FEMALE POLITICAL FIGURES IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCES OF IRAN:  
SHĪRVĀN AND MĀZANDARĀN

In the early sixteenth century, at least one, and probably two, Ṣafavid princesses were present in ShĪrvān. A daughter of Shāh Ismā'īl I, Parī-Khān Khānūm I (not to be confused with her namesake and niece, Parī-Khān Khānūm II), whose name appears in this context in one source only, was married to Sulṭān-Khālīl, the hereditary ruler of ShĪrvān (r. 1524–35).<sup>52</sup> Another Parī-Khān Khānūm I, who died shortly before 1551, is quoted at a later date in a Ṣafavid court chronicle as the wife of Darvīsh Muḥammad Khān, the ruler of Shakkī (d. 1551); there is a possibility that she was the same lady married for a second time.<sup>53</sup> But the question becomes more complicated as still another Parī-Khān Khānūm I, wife of the Qizilbāsh amīr 'Abdullāh Khān Ustājālū, governor of ShĪrvān between 1551–66, is quoted by another chronicler in 1553–54, that is a couple of years after the recorded death of the 'Shakkī' Parī-Khān Khānūm.<sup>54</sup> Evidently, the wife of 'Abdullāh Khān could not be the same person as the lady married in Shakkī, but might have been, in theory, identical with the one previously married to the ShĪrvānshāh.<sup>55</sup> The fact that two princesses of the same generation are referred to by the same name would suggest that, at least in one case, 'Parī-Khān' was not a personal but an honorific name. In any case, even if there is confusion as to their number and the order of consecutive marriages, it can be stated that at least one of Shāh Ismā'īl I's daughters was engaged in ShĪrvān-Ṣafavid politics.<sup>56</sup>

Parī-Khān Khānūm I, wife of the ShĪrvānshāh, took part in the struggle for power after her husband died childless in 1535, and became an important political figure in ShĪrvān. Her first move was to give up to the Ṣafavids a Gilānī refugee (and another of the Ṣafavid sons-in-law), Amīra Dubbāj Raṣhtī, known as Muẓaffar Khān, who had rebelled against the Ṣafavids and fled to ShĪrvān where he was given hospitality by Sulṭān-Khālīl.<sup>57</sup> Later, between two candidates to the throne, she supported the otherwise unknown Qalāntar Beg, who pretended to be a descendant of ancient kings of ShĪrvān, against a young nephew of her husband, Shāh-Rukh Sulṭān, supported by the majority of the *amīrs* of ShĪrvān. One can only suppose that it would be easier for the Ṣafavids to keep control over an obscure pretender than over a ruler belonging to the reigning dynasty. This is confirmed by the fact that when the party of Shāh-Rukh Sulṭān

became victorious, the Ṣafavids sent troops to Shīrvān, while the princess fled to the Ṣafavid court, encouraging the Shāh to conquer the province. Thus, concludes the chronicler, because of the enmity between Parī-Khān Khānūm I and the *amīrs* of Shīrvān, the Shīrvānshāhs lost power in their own country.<sup>58</sup>

After the conquest of Shīrvān by the Ṣafavids, Darvīsh Muḥammad Khān, the ruler of Shakkī, who had been among the supporters of Shāh-Rukh Sulṭān, surrendered to the Ṣafavids and was reconfirmed by them as governor of Shakkī in 1538–39.<sup>59</sup> In the same year he married Parī-Khān Khānūm I.<sup>60</sup> The influence of his royal spouse ensured that he stayed loyal to the Ṣafavids, and it was only after her death in, or shortly before, 1551 that he rebelled.<sup>61</sup>

There are also suggestions that Khādīja Begam, another daughter of Shāh Ṭahmāsp, married to a local ruler from Gilān, was, after the death of her husband, no stranger to political engagement. However, Persian sources give too few details in this matter.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to the Ṣafavid princesses scattered in many provincial courts of Iran, women from local ruling families seem to have been participants in politics. A local chronicle of Māzandarān by Mīr Tīmūr Mar‘ashī on several occasions quotes royal Māzandarānī ladies involved in politics.

The most famous of these Māzandarānīs was of course the previously mentioned Khayr al-Nisā’ Begam, daughter of Mīr ‘Abdullāh Khān II, who in 1565–66 became wife of the Ṣafavid Shāh Muḥammad Khudābanda. She was the *de facto* ruler of the Ṣafavid state between February 1578 and July 1579. Her family, descended from the celebrated Mar‘ashī sayyid Mīr-i Buzurg (d. 1379), had ruled Māzandarān for about two hundred years.<sup>63</sup> Little is known about Khayr al-Nisā’ Begam’s background, but it seems at least that she did not lack role models of women politicians at the Māzandarānī court. Several ladies of her own extended family appear in Mīr Tīmūr’s chronicle as politically influential and active people. One was an unnamed wife of Mīr ‘Abdullāh Khān II (but not Khayr al-Nisā’ Begam’s mother); another, Bibī Zuhra, the grandmother of Mīr Sulṭān-Murād (d. c. 1576–77), a victorious rival cousin of Mīr ‘Abdullāh Khān; still another, a lady called Tītī Begam, chief wife of the same Mīr Sulṭān-Murād.<sup>64</sup>

Among them, in the second half of the sixteenth century, Tītī Begam held an important position in Māzandarān at the court of

her husband, Mīr Sulṭān-Murād, in the town of Sārī. Tītī Begam, whose personal name is not given by the chronicler, was a native of the rich neighboring province of Gīlān, also on the Caspian sea. She was herself of royal origin descending from the Kār Kiyās, an important *sayyid* family of local rulers of Lāhijān in eastern Gīlān. She was also a paternal aunt of Khān-Aḥmad Khān Gīlānī, the then ruler of Lāhijān, who later married into the Ṣafavid family.<sup>65</sup>

Around 1565–66, Tītī Begam associated herself with a group of Māzandarānī *amīrs* who rebelled against Mīr Sulṭān-Murād. The chronicler Mīr Tīmūr says that her enmity was due to her husband's falling in love with his new wife. But Mīr Tīmūr himself, who also belonged to the Mar'ashī family, was not satisfied by such an interpretation. He indirectly suggests rather that the *amīrs*' rebellion had political goals, aiming at access to and maintaining power.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Mīr Sulṭān-Murād had just married a new wife. The problem was that she was a Ṣafavid, Māh-Parvar Khānūm, a niece of Shāh Ṭahmāsp from the marriage of his sister Parī-Khān Khānūm I (see above) to 'Abdullāh Khān Ustājālū.<sup>67</sup> Together with the rebel party, Tītī Begam worried, above all, that the throne of Sārī should fall to the children (yet to be born) of the Ṣafavid bride. She wished to secure formal guarantees that power in Māzandarān would be inherited by her own son.<sup>68</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS

Close scrutiny of the available primary sources shows that women took an unexpectedly large part in public life during the first century of Ṣafavid rule in Iran. The present study is limited to bringing forward some new data and some suggestions.

Ṣafavid contemporary sources are socially selective and deal mainly, and nearly exclusively, with women from the upper levels of society. Although to some degree it describes exceptions rather than the rule, Fakhrī's collection of biographies of female authors, the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib*, should certainly be considered among the most valuable primary sources for the social and cultural history of the period. Only about twenty are listed, but the learned ladies of the *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib* represent a broad social group of educated women of Khurasan of the years directly preceding the firm establishment of the Ṣafavids in the area. The text demonstrates the depth to which Persian literary culture penetrated in the early sixteenth century among the elite circles, including women.

Fakhri's work bears witness to the vivacity of the Tīmūrid social and cultural models, which continued in multiple forms during the Ṣafavid period. The weight of the Tīmūrid heritage in the Ṣafavid state has often been stressed; it must not be underestimated. Were it not for Fakhri's text, we might greatly undervalue the important participation of the women of eastern Iran in general intellectual life in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Questions concerning the access of women to intellectual activities during the whole of the Ṣafavid period remain unresolved. Another provincial Ṣafavid court of Khurasan, that of Maṣḥhad, became a flourishing center of arts around the middle of the sixteenth century, under the patronage of Sulṭān-Ibrāhīm Mīrṣā, a grandson of Shāh Ismā'īl I, and it should certainly be taken into account.

In addition to Fakhri's work, which illuminates the princely and upper urban milieu, many other Ṣafavid primary sources confirm that literacy was the rule among the elite women at the royal court. Literacy and, generally speaking, access to and quality of education, even including physical exercise,<sup>69</sup> seems to have been important factors in promoting the social position of Ṣafavid women.

While Irano-Tīmūrid traditions enabled women to participate in intellectual and artistic life, the cultural background of the Ṣafavids and the Qizilbāsh, their semi-nomadic Turkmen military supporters, permitted considerable participation of women in political and sometimes military arenas. The old Turkic heritage of steppe nomad societies may have been the basis of the particular social status of women under the Ṣafavids, allowing for special social 'privileges' of the royal women.<sup>70</sup> It is important to note, however, that, according to the new data on the provinces of Māzandarān and Gilān presented here, ladies from local ruling families, not of Turkic but of Iranian (or Irano-Arab) origin, also had access to the exercise of power.

Generally speaking, women of royal blood were often acting on the political scene to promote the interests of their family, or of their party. Intellectually, they were perfectly prepared for such activity. Socially, they were allowed to engage in such activity under certain conditions, principally as political counsellors, but also as leaders in a situation of crisis, or when a male ruler was not immediately available. In the seventeenth century, the reforms of Shāh 'Abbās I modified, among other things, the structure of political forces in Ṣafavid Iran, diminished the influence of the Qizilbāsh-

Turkoman component, and resulted in a close seclusion of royal women thus creating new conditions for the exercise by the latter of their political influence. But until then, many Şafavid princesses were present in public life. Throughout the sixteenth century, they were regularly intervening in, even conducting, state politics.

## NOTES

Part of the material used for this chapter was first presented at the Third European Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europaea, 12–15 September 1995, Cambridge, England under the title of “Fakhri Heravi’s *tazkera* of poetesses [*Javahir al-‘ajayib*]: A source for Timurid and Safavid Khurasan”.

1. M. Szuppe, “La participation des femmes de la famille royale à l’exercice du pouvoir en Iran safavide au xv<sup>e</sup> siècle,” part I: *Studia Iranica* 23.2 (1994): 211–58, part II: *Studia Iranica* 24.1 (1995): 61–122. See also, by the same author, “Status, Knowledge and Politics: Women in 16th century Safavid Iran,” forthcoming in Guity Nashat, ed., *Women in Iran from Medieval to Modern Times*. For a classic discussion on women in the Muslim Middle East (including information on the pre-Islamic period), see EI(2), s.v. “al-Mar’a,” by several contributors. For a general historical survey of the participation of Muslim women in cultural activities and public life, see W. Walther, *Women in Islam, from Medieval to Modern Times*, trans. G. Nashat (Princeton & New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, 1993) 3rd ed., esp. pp. 47–72 (“Women in Islamic Law, in the Qur’an and in Tradition”), pp. 103–42 (“Women in Islamic History”), and pp. 143–53 (“Women in Islamic Culture”). See also L.P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), on the exercise of political power by Ottoman royal women, especially in the period from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.

2. Among the main European travellers of the seventeenth century are the French Jean Chardin, *Voyages en Perse, et d’autres lieux de l’Orient*, 10 vols. (Paris: L. Langlès, 1811); the German Adam Olearius, *Vermehrte Neue Beschreibung der Muscovitischen und Persischen Reyse* (Schleswig, 1656) rpt., ed. D. Lohmeier (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1971); the Italian Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il Pellegrino, descritti da lui medesimo in lettere all’erudito suo amico Mario Schipano. La Persia*, 2 Partes (Roma, 1658); the English Thomas Herbert, *A relation of some yeares travaile...especially the territories of the Persian monarchie* (London, 1634); but also many others. For a selective bibliography of European accounts, see *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6: “The Timurid and Safavid Periods,” ed. P. Jackson & L. Lockhart (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 1018–20 [hereafter: CH]. In the sixteenth



century the Venetian Cypriot Michele Membrè (not listed in the CHI bibliography), who sojourned at the Şafavid court in 1540–41, furnishes some interesting information on women in his *Relazione di Persia* (ed. G.R. Cardona, Napoli 1969). An English translation with an excellent historical commentary and notes has recently been published by A.H. Morton (*Michele Membrè, A Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia, 1539–1542*, SOAS [London: University of London, 1993]). See also, R. Ferrier, "Women in Safavid Iran: the Evidence of European Travellers," in the present volume. For the Persian and European sources exploited, see the bibliography to Szuppe, "La participation" parts I and II.

3. The Iranian vizier of Khurasan Ḥabībullah Sāvajī (in office, 1522–26) was a notable exception. The situation started to change by the late 1530's with the arrival in Herat of the Qizilbāsh *amīr*, Muḥammad Khān Takalū (d. 1557), a 'new-type' of Şafavid governor who showed interest in the development of the local economy and culture, see M. Szuppe, *Entre Timourides, Uzbeks et Safavides: Questions d'histoire politique et sociale de Hérat dans la première moitié du xvie siècle* (Paris: Cahiers de Studia Iranica 12, 1992), pp. 109–17. On Muḥammad Khān and his son's interest in artistic activities, see M. Szuppe, "Kinship Ties of the Safavids and the Qizilbash *Amīrs* in Late Sixteenth-Century: A Case Study of the Political Career of Members of the Sharaf al-Din Oghli Tekelu Family," in C.P. Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, Pembroke Papers 4 (London: I.B. Tauris Ltd., 1996), pp. 79–106.

4. Fakhrī Haravī, *Javāhir al-'Ajāyib*, lithographed edition (Lucknow, 1873; hereafter: Fakhrī). Printed edition, ed. Sayyid Husām al-Din Rāshidī, *Tadhkira-yi Rawdhat al-Salāṭīn va Javāhir al-'Ajāyib ma'a Dīwān-i Fakhrī Haravī* (Hyderabad, 1968). See C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (London, 1927– ), no. 1099; also A. Sprenger, *Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Hindūstāny Manuscripts in the Libraries of the King of Oudh*, vol. 1: *Persian and Hindūstāny Poetry* (Calcutta, 1854), no. 5, pp. 9–11. Also, compare Walther, *Women in Islam*, pp. 143–53, on female poets in the medieval period.

5. Fakhrī is the author of the first translation into Persian of Mīr 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī's *Majālis al-Nafāyis* (written in Caḡhatāy Turkish), in 1522. Edition: Mīr Nizām al-Dīn 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī, *Majālis al-Nafāyis*, ed. 'Alī Asghar Ḥikmat (Tehran, 1323 SH/1944). Fakhrī was not the only Timūrid-Şafavid writer bearing witness to this feeling of nostalgia for the age that had just ended. The most famous of them was Khwāndamīr (a short notice on him in Szuppe, *Entre Timourides*, pp. 55–57). For the life and works of another writer and poet of Herat, Vāşifi, see A.N. Boldyrev, *Zajnaddin Vasifi, tadhikskij pisatel' XVI v. (opyt tvorcheskoj biografii)* (Stalinabad, 1957). Vāşifi's memoirs on Herat, called the *Badāy'i al-vaqāy'i*, were published by Boldyrev in two volumes (Stalinabad, 1957; reissued Moscow, 1961; and Tehran, 1349 SH/1970). There was also the historian Amīr

Maḥmūd b. *Khwāndamīr*, the author of the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Ismā‘īl-i avval va Shāh Ṭahmāsp* (known under different titles, mainly *Dhayl-i ḥabīb al-siyar* or *Jang-nāma-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsp*), see Szuppe, *Entre Timourides*, pp. 57–59. There are two editions of this chronicle (each useful, but unsatisfactory for different reasons): Gh. R. Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, ed., *Irān dar rūzgār-i Shāh Ismā‘īl va Shāh Ṭahmāsp-i Ṣafavī ta’līf-i Amīr Maḥmūd b. Khwāndamīr* (Tehran, 1370 SH/1991), and M.‘A. Jarrāhī, ed., *Tārīkh-i Shāh Ismā‘īl va Shāh Ṭahmāsp Ṣafavī (Dhayl-i tārīkh-i ḥabīb al-siyar)*, (Tehran, 1370 SH/1991).

6. See the introduction to Fakhri Haravī, *Tadhkira-yi rawḍat al-salāṭin*, ed. ‘A. Khayyāmpūr (Tabriz: Dānīshkade-yi Adabiyāt-i Tabriz, 1345 SH/1966, p. “yā-b.” For the biographical details of Fakhri’s life, see Storey, no. 1099.

7. On royal ladies and *amīr*’s wives participating in, or hosting, feasts in Timūrid Samarqand (early fifteenth c.), see G. Le Strange, trans., *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane, 1403–1406* (London: Routledge & Sons, 1928), pp. 244–45, 258–61. On ladies present at princely literary gatherings [*majlis*] in late Timūrid Herat (late fifteenth–early sixteenth century), see below. On mixed-company feasts at the Mughal court of India in the first half of the sixteenth century, see Gul-Badan (Princess Rose-Body), *The History of Humayun (Humāyūn-nāma)*, trans. A.S. Beveridge (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902), pp. 31–35 (Persian text), and pp. 118–29 (trans.).

8. Among the ladies of Herat composing verses at Üzbeq courts were the Timūrid Mughūl Khānūm (‘Ā’yīshā-Sultān Khātun bint Sultān-Maḥmūd Khān), wife of Muḥammad Khān Shaybānī (d. 1510), and Ḥayāt(i) of Herat, a lady poet of the court of ‘Ubayd Allāh Khān (d. 1540). See Fakhri, pp. 11–12, 19–20. See also below.

9. And then again shortly between 1512–13, 1529–30, 1536–37.

10. For instance, Āfāq Begam Jalāyir seems to have joined the court of Bābur in India only in 1528, see footnote 19.

11. Fakhri, pp. 20–21. Jamālī appears under the name of Ḥijābī in the copy of the *Javāhir al-‘Ajāyib* described by Sprenger, p. 11, no. 17. On Mawlānā Badr al-Dīn Hilālī, see Navā‘ī, pp. 68–69; Khwāndamīr, *Faṣlī az Khulāṣat al-akhbār*, ed. Guyā I’timādī (Kabul, 1324 SH/1946), p. 65; Sām Mīrzā, *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, ed. V. Dastgirdī (Tehran, 1314 SH/1936), pp. 90–94; Vāsīfī (ed. Tehran), I, pp. 97, 405; and, s.v. “Hilālī, Badr al-Dīn,” EI(2). On the context of Hilālī being accused of Shī‘ite sympathies (while he was a well-known Sunni) and his execution by the Üzbegs, see Szuppe, *Entre Timourides*, p. 128.

12. On Ḥayāt (Ārūn), see Fakhri, pp. 19–20. See also Sprenger, p. 11, no. 16; Taqī Awḥadī, *‘Arāfāt al-‘ashiqīn*, ms India Office Library, I.O. 3654, fol. 146b; and Shīr Khān Lōdī, *Mir‘at al-khiyāl*, ms Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Suppl. Persan 323, fol. 190a–b. On Mawlānā Baqā‘ī, see Taqī Awḥadī, fol. 264b.

13. Fakhri, pp. 15. Navā'i, pp. 102–03, on Shaykhzādā Anṣārī and his mother Bidilī. Shīr Khān, fol. 191b, provides the name of Shaykh 'Abdullāh Dīvāna's father. On *mu'ammā*, one of the most fashionable poetical forms of early sixteenth century Khurasan, see M.E. Subtelny, "Scenes from the Literary Life of Tīmūrid Herāt," in *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, ed. R.M. Savory and D.A. Agius, *Papers in Mediaeval Studies* 6 (Toronto, 1984): 137–55, esp. 140–43.

14. On Mihri, see Fakhri, pp. 10–11; and Navā'i, p. 350. She also appears in some *tadhkiras* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Shīr Khān, fol. 189b, and Luṭf-'Alī Beg Shāmlū Ādhar, *Ātashkada*, MS Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Suppl. Persan 1327, fol. 205a.

15. Fakhri, pp. 13–14. On Khwāja Afḍal, see Navā'i, p. 119.

16. Fakhri, pp. 16–17. Her father's name was Amīr Yādgār; her sister, known as Khānzāda-yi Turbatī, was also a poet, see Fakhri, pp. 17–18, also Sprenger, p. 11, no. 10.

17. Fakhri, pp. 18–19. The text precises that the Gurgān in question was the same place which used to be known as Astarābād. It's an important precision, reflecting a stage in the transfer of the name of a particular town. It confirms that the place of origin of the *sayyid* was identical with the modern Gurgān, the former Astarābād, and not with the medieval Gurgān, now known as Gunbād-i Qābus. However, it has to be noted that the Kār Kiyās, if they are indeed the family in question here, were connected with Gilān rather than with Gurgān. Also, see below and footnote 65.

18. Fakhri, p. 21. On Mawlānā Āhī, of Caghatāy Turkish origin, who was a *ṣūfi* and a poet contemporary of Sulṭān-Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, see Sām Mīrzā, p. 182. Terevvi appears as "Nizdi" in the list of Sprenger, p. 11, no. 20. On the possible meaning of T.r.v.i, see J.W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon* (Constantinople, 1890).

19. Fakhri, pp. 12–13. Āfāq Begam's father, 'Alī Jalāyir, was an *amīr* in the service of the Tīmūrid Yādgār Muḥammad Mīrzā, a cousin of Sulṭān-Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (Navā'i, p. 108). Her brothers, Ḥasan and Muḥammad, are mentioned in Navā'i, respectively pp. 108, 111. According to Beveridge's commentary to Gul-Badan, p. 26 (commentary pp. 204, 215), she was most probably identical with the Tīmūrid princess, bearing the same name, who appears in Bābur's memoirs at the date of 935/1528 as a daughter of the princess Sulṭān-Bakht Begam bint Sulṭān-Abu Sa'īd Mīrzā, without the mention of her father's name, see Bābur (Zahīrū'd al-dīn Muḥammad Bābur Pādshāh Ghāzi), *Bābur-nāma [Memoirs of Bābur]*, trans. A.S. Beveridge (New Delhi, 1922; reprint: 1979), p. 616.

20. Fakhri, pp. 14–15.

21. Szuppe, *Entre Timourides*, p. 128.

22. Fakhri, pp. 14. Also, Navā'i, pp. 350–51.

23. Taqī Awḥādī, fol. 162b–163a; and Shīr Khān, fol. 190b, on her fortune.

24. Shīr Khān, fol. 190b. On Khwāja Āṣifi, see Khwāndamīr, *Khulāṣat*, p. 59; Khwāndamīr, *Tārīkh-i ḥabīb al-siyar*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī, 4 vols. (Tehran, 1333 SH/1955), vol. 4, p. 354; and, s.v. "Āṣifi," EI(2).

25. For instance, Mughūl Khānūm and Terevvi, see Fakhrī, pp. 12, 21.

26. Fakhrī, pp. 18–19.

27. Thus in Shīr Khān, fol. 191a, on Āghā Dūst(i), daughter of [Darvīsh Pīr] Qayām Sabzavārī, who appears as Nisā'ī-Dūstī in the lithographed text of Fakhrī (pp. 21–22), or as Fāṭima Khātun in the manuscript described by Sprenger (p. 11, no. 19), where she is said to be a daughter of a "*darvīsh-zāda*" [son of a darvish], who was a brother of Qayām al-Dīn Sabzavārī.

28. Fakhrī, p. 13. After the fall of Herat to the Üzbegs in 1507, Badī' al-Zamān Mīrzā sought refuge at the court of Shāh Ismā'īl I, and then went over to the Ottomans.

29. Fakhrī, pp. 19–20.

30. Fakhrī, p. 14; Navā'ī, p. 350–51.

31. Qāḍī Aḥmad Qumī, *Khulāṣat al-tavārīkh*, ed. I. Ishraqī, 2 vols. [numbered as one] (Tehran, 1358–62 SH/1980–84), p. 176 [hereafter: Qumī]. For the correspondence of Maryam Begam and Zaynab Begam, daughters of Shāh Ṭahmāsp, and their mother, Hūrī-Khān Khānūm, see Szuppe, "La participation," II, pp. 61–62. Zaynab Begam later became one of the most influential figures of the court of Shāh 'Abbās I, her nephew, see Szuppe, "La participation," II, pp. 100–102, and Kathryn Babayan, "The 'Aqā'id al-Nisā: A Glimpse at Safavid Women in Local Isfahani Culture," ch. 16 in the present volume.

32. The chronicles record the names of her teachers, see Qumī, p. 430; Qāḍī Aḥmad Qumī, *Gulistān-i hunar*, ed. A. Suhaylī Khwānsārī (Tehran, 1352 SH/1973), p. 99; Budāq Qazvīnī, *Javāhir al-akhbār*, ms National Library of Saint-Petersburg (Gosudarstvennaya Publichnaya Biblioteka), Dorn 288, fol. 111a. I am grateful to Professor J. Calmard for having provided me with a photocopy of Qazvīnī's text, which is the unique known manuscript of this important Ṣafavid chronicle. See also C. Adle, "Les artistes nommés Dust-Moḥammad au xv<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Studia Iranica* 22.2 (1993): 219–96, esp. 228.

33. See Adle, "Dust-Moḥammad," pp. 226–27, where he discusses the possibility that Dūst-Muḥammad Haravī, who taught calligraphy to Shāhzādā Sultānūm, was also a painter. Also, see A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah: Late Sixteenth Century Painting at the Imperial Court of Iran* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 171.

34. Qumī, p. 637.

35. Shīr Khān, fol. 189b–90a.

36. Shīr Khān, fol. 189b–90a, quoting the *rubā'ī*.

37. Chardin, 8, pp. 27–28. For the later Ṣafavid period, see also Chardin's description of the organization of the harem and the offices held

by women (Chardin, 6, pp. 13 *sqq.*). See also Babayan, "The 'Aqā'id al-Nisā'."

38. Iskandar Beg Munshī Turkmān, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, ed. I. Afshār, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1334 *SH*/1955), p. 123. See R.M. Savory, trans., *History of Shāh 'Abbās the Great*, 2 vols. (Boulder, Co.: Persian Heritage Series, Westview Press, 1978), p. 284.

39. Ātūn, listed by Sprenger (p. 11, no. 16), appears under her other pen name, Ḥayāt(i), in the lithographed copy of Fakhri (pp. 19–20). See also Taqī Awḥadī, fol. 146b (Bibī Ātūn); and Shīr Khān, fol. 190a–b, who calls her Tūnī (for: Bibī?) Ātūn. *Ātūn* designates a female teacher of reading, writing, and sewing, see 'A.A. Dihkhudā, *Lughāt-nāma*, 37 vols. (Tehran, 1325 *SH*/1946). For 'Ā'yisha Muqrīya, see Navā'i, p. 350. A *muqrī* is, according to Dihkhudā, a person teaching to read and to recite the Qur'ān.

40. It was not until the nineteenth century that other *tadhkiras* devoted to famous women were composed. The *Tadhkirat al-Nisā'*, also known as *Akhtar-i tābān*, by Abu'l-Qāsim Muḥtasham Shīrvānī, contains entries on eighty-two poetesses, while the *Khayrāt-i hīsān*, by Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Marāghī is a three volume work, see Storey, nos. 1231, 1641. It was also in the late nineteenth century that the famous treaty, entitled the *Ma'āyib al-rijāl* [The Faults of Men], was written by Bibī Khānūm Astarābādī in response to Khwānsarī's *Ta'ib al-nisvān* [The Punishment of Women]. See the review of a recent edition of Bibī Khānūm's work by J. Maṭīnī, in *Irānshināsī*, 5.2 (1993): 436–42. I am indebted to Mr. Iraj Afshār for bringing to my attention the nineteenth-century works on and by women.

41. Dawlatshāh b. 'Alā' u'd-Dawla Bakhtishāh al-Ghāzī of Samarqand (Dawlatshāh), *The Tadhkiratu' Sh-Shu'arā* [Memoirs of the Poets], ed. E.G. Browne (London and Leiden: Luzac & Co. and E.J. Brill, 1901.) pp. 65–66 (Mahistī), pp. 289–90 (Jahān Khātun): both lived before the 15th century. Dawlatshāh (p. 66) quotes also another poetess, named Parī, who, together with Mahistī, was at the court of the Saljūkid Sulṭān-Sanjar. Navā'ī, p. 102–03 (Bidili), p. 164 (Āfāq Begam), and p. 350 (Mahistī, Mihri and Bija Munajjima).

42. Taqī Awḥadī refers to Fakhri's collection of biographies as *Tadhkirat al-nisā'*, see for example ff. 511b, 783b, etc., and he often quotes from him *verbatim*. It is to be noted that the India Office manuscript of Taqī Awḥadī's text used here (I.O. 3654) does not go beyond the letter 'qāf.'

43. Shīr Khān, fol. 189b–92a.

44. Ādhar, fol. 204b–05b.

45. Among them were, for instance, Gul-Badan Begam (d. 1603), daughter of the Emperor Bābur, and the author of the *Humāyūn-nāma* (see footnote 7 for bibliographical details, and see, s.v. "Gulbadan Bēgam," EI(2), as well as one of her nieces (by a sister), Salīma-Sulṭān Begam, who was a poetess writing under the pen name of Makhfī (see Gul-Badan, pp. 276–79).

Another was Nūr-Jahān Begam (1577–1645), of Iranian Khurasani origin, the celebrated wife of the Emperor Jahāngīr [see EI (2), s.v. “Nūr-Jahān Bēgam,” and *Ādhar*, fol. 205b, who quotes Nūr-Jahān Begam’s verses]. The princesses Mihr-Angīz Begam, daughter of Muẓaffar-Ḥusayn Mīrẓā b. Sulṭān-Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, and Shād Begam, a royal cousin, both “played many musical instruments,” see Gul-Badan, p. 32 (Persian text), and p. 121 (trans.)

46. See Szuppe, “La participation,” I, pp. 242–52, and footnotes for references to the sources.

47. On the participation of Ṣafavid royal ladies in the political life in the 16th century, see Szuppe, “La participation,” II, pp. 70–102.

48. Gul-Badan, p. 69 (Persian text) and pp. 169–70 (trans.).

49. On the vizier, Mīrẓā Salmān, see R.M. Savory, “The Significance of the Political Murder of Mīrẓā Salmān,” in R.M. Savory, *Studies on the History of Safawid Iran* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), xv (originally published in *Islamic Studies*, Journal of the Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, 3 (1964): 181–91). The vizier later turned against the begam and took part in the coup that brought her down.

50. Qumī, pp. 680, 685–87; Iskandar Beg, pp. 235–39; Don Juan [Urūj Beg Bayāt], *Don Juan of Persia, a Shi’ah Catholic, 1560–1604*, trans. Sir E. Denison Ross & E. Power, intro. G. Le Strange, (London: Routledge & Sons, 1926), p. 150. See also Naṣrullāh Falsafī, *Zindagāni-yi Shāh ‘Abbās-i avval*, 3 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihṛān, 1332–39 SH/1953–60), vol. 1, pp. 50–53. *Khayr al-Nisā’* Begam was seen by European, Ottoman, and Georgian observers as the commander-in-chief of the Ṣafavid army, see A. Jenkinson (and other Englishmen), *Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia*, ed. E. Delmar Morgan and C.H. Coote (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1886), pp. 447–48; Müneccimbaşı Ahmed Dede, *Şahā’if al-akhbār fi vakāyi al-‘şār*, Turkish trans. of the *Jāmi’ al-Duwal* by Ahmed Nedim, 3 vols. (Istanbul, 1285/1868), vol. 3, p. 202; ed. and trans. M. Brosset, jeune, *Chronique géorgienne* (Paris: La Société Royale Asiatique de France, 1830), p. 21.

51. Some other examples are those of Parī-Khān Khānūm I, daughter of Shāh Ismā’il I, in 1553–54 (Qumī, p. 372; Faḍlī Khuzānī-Iṣfahānī, *Afdal al-tavārikh*, ms British Library, Or. 4678, fol. 202b–03b; see also Szuppe, “La participation,” II, pp. 64–65); the wife of Burūn Sulṭān Rūmlū, a Qizilbāsh governor of Tūs, in 1527 (Khurshāh Qubād al-Ḥusaynī Ilcī, *Tārikh-i Ilcī-yi Nizāmshāh*, ms British Library, Or. 153, fol. 35b); the mother of a Kurdish *amīr*, Dawlatyār Khān, in the second half of the sixteenth century (Amīr Sharaf Khān Bidlisī, *Sharaf-nāma, tārikh-i mufaṣṣal-i Kurdistān*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abbāsī, 2nd ed. [Tehran, 1364 SH/1986], p. 427).

52. Ilcī, ff. 52a, 56a, 79b, 80a. She was certainly born before 1519, the year of birth of the youngest of Shāh Ismā’il’s daughters, Shāhzādā Sulṭānūm (see Qumī, pp. 155, 430). According to ‘Abdī Beg Shīrāzī Navīdī, *Takmilat al-akhbār, tārikh-i Ṣafawiya az āghāz tā 978 hijrī-yi qamarī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn

Navā'ī (Tehran, 1369 SH/1990), pp. 91, 104, Parī-Khān Khānūm (he speaks of the one married in Shakkī, see below) was a full sister of Shāh Ṭahmāsp.

53. 'Abdī Beg, pp. 91, 104.

54. Qumī, pp. 372, 756.

55. The Shīrvānshāh had died childless; also, there are no children by the Ṣafavid princess recorded in the household of the ruler of Shakkī. On the contrary, 'Abdullāh Khān had at least a son, Shāh-Qulī Mīrzā (Szuppe, "La participation," I, p. 222), and a daughter, Māh-Parvar Khānūm (see below), by his Ṣafavid wife. There is no specific indication as to the date of birth of these two children, but the daughter was marriageable in 1565–66.

56. On the question of the identification of these women, see Szuppe, "La participation," II, pp. 75–76. On the military episode in which the mother or, according to another version, the wife of 'Abdullāh Khān (that is, Parī-Khān Khānūm I) played the main part, see Szuppe, "La participation," II, pp. 64–65. On Parī-Khān Khānūm herself, see Szuppe, "La participation," II, pp. 72–75 (and the footnotes for the sources and secondary literature).

57. For source-references for the whole of this paragraph, see Szuppe, "La participation," II, p. 72–75. On Amīra Dubbāj Raštī and his marriage (in 1519 or 1521) to Khānish Khānūm I, daughter of Shāh Ismā'īl I, see Szuppe, "La participation," I, p. 217 and especially footnotes 25–27.

58. Ilcī, fol. 52a, 80a.

59. Qumī, p. 279; Khuzānī, fol. 104a.

60. 'Abdī Beg, pp. 91, 104.

61. 'Abdī Beg, p. 104.

62. Szuppe, "La participation," II, p. 66. Khadija Begam was married to a great-nephew of Shāh Ṭahmāsp, Jamshīd Khān of Rašt. Jamshīd Khān was a grandson of a sister of Shāh Ṭahmāsp, Khānish Khānūm I, and Amīra Dubbāj Raštī (see footnote 57).

63. For an excellent survey of the history of the Mar'ashī-Māzandarānī *sayyids*, see, s.v. "Mar'ashīs," J. Calmard, EI(2).

64. Mīr Timūr Mar'ashī, *Tārīkh-i khāndān-i Mar'ashī-yi Māzandarān*, ed. M. Sutūda (Tehran, 1364 SH/1985), pp. 121, 275, 284–85.

65. Mīr Timūr, pp. 160, 174. Khān-Aḥmad Khān's marriage to Maryam Begam bint Shāh Ṭahmāsp took place in November–December 1577, see Szuppe, "La participation," I, p. 229 (and footnotes for the sources). On the links of the Kār Kiyās with the Ṣafavid movement in its early years of struggle for power, see M.M. Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids. Šī'ism, Šūfism and the Gulāt*, Band III (Wiesbaden: Freiburgen Islamstudien, 1972), p. 80; Gh. Sarwar, *History of Shāh Ismā'īl Safawī* (Aligarh, 1939), pp. 31–33, 51–52.

66. Mīr Timūr, p. 175.

67. Mīr Timūr, pp. 174–76.

68. Mīr Timūr, p. 174. Māh-Parvar Khānūm, died rather soon after her marriage. Tītī Begam's elder son, Mīrzā Khān, later succeeded his father,

but was taken prisoner and executed in 1578 in Qazvīn by the order of Khayr al-Nisā' Begam to avenge her father's death. See, s.v. "Mar'ashīs," EI(2); Szuppe, "La participation," II, pp. 95-96 (and footnotes for the sources).

69. On such aspects of Şafavid princesses' education as horse riding, archery, and shooting, see the references assembled in Szuppe, "La participation," I, pp. 245-47, and Szuppe, "Status, Knowledge and Politics," (forthcoming). It is noteworthy that, at the Mughal court of Bābur, two of the Tīmūrid princesses, granddaughters of Sulṭān-Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, Shād Begam and Mihr-Angīz Begam, are described as women who "used to wear men's clothes and were adorned by varied accomplishments, such as the making of thumb-rings and arrows [or: arrow-heads], playing polo, and shooting with the bow and arrow," see Gul-Badan, p. 32 (Persian text) and pp. 120-21 (trans.)

70. Szuppe, "La participation," I, pp. 212-13, 252-53, and II, pp. 104-05.



APPENDIX I:  
THE *JAVĀHIR AL-'AJĀYIB* POETESSES QUOTED  
IN OTHER COLLECTIONS OF BIOGRAPHIES  
(WITH VARIANT PEN NAMES)

Fakhrī, <i>Javāhir al-'Ajāyib</i> , mid-16th c.	Navā'ī, end 15th c.	Taqī Awbādī,* beg. 17th c.	Shīr-Khān, end 17th c.	Ādhar, 18th c.
LIVED BEFORE THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY				
1. Mahistī	X	—	—	X
2. Pādshāh Khātun	—	X	—	X (Lāla Khātun)
3. Jahān Khātun	—	—	—	—
4. Hayāt	—	—	—	—
LIVED IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY				
5. Mihri	X	—	X	X
LIVED AT THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH OR FIRST HALF OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY				
6. Mughūl Khātun	—	—	—	—
7. Āfāq Begum Jalāyir	X	X	X	—
8. Nihāni	—	—	—	—
9. Bija Munajjima	X	—	—	—
10. Bibi 'Ismatī	—	—	X (?)	X (?)
11. Bidīlī	X	—	X	—
12. Nihāni-yi Shīrāzī	—	—	—	—
—, <i>Dukhtar-i Qadī-yi Samarqandī?</i> **	—	—	—	—
13. Nisā'ī (Fakhr al-Nisā')	—	X	—	—
14. Khānzāda-yi Turbatī	—	—	X (Kh. Tabrizī)	—
15. Pertevi-yi (?) Tabrizī	—	—	—	—
16. Sayyid(a) Begum (Shāh-Mulḳ)	—	X	X	—
—, <i>Dukhtar-i Ghazālī-yi Yazdī?</i> **	—	—	—	—
17. Bibi Ārizū-yi Samarqandī	—	—	X	—
18. Da'ifī	—	X	—	—
19. Hayāt-i Heravī (Ārūn)	—	X (Bibi Ārūn)	X (Tūnī Ārūn)	—
20. Jamālī (Hijābī)	—	X (Hijābī)	—	—
—, <i>'Ifsāt-yi Isfahānī?</i> **	—	—	—	X
21. Terevī, Tarvī (?) (Nizdī)	—	—	—	—
22. Nisā'ī (Dūstī, Fāṭima Khātun)	—	—	X (Āghā Dūst)	—
23. Nisā'ī-yi Nisavī	—	—	—	—

\* The ms consulted (I.O. 3654) contains entries from the letter "āli" to "qāf" only.

\*\* Name listed in Sprenger; does not appear in the lithographed text.

APPENDIX 2  
 PRINCIPAL LADIES OF THE SAFAVID AND RELATED FAMILIES QUOTED  
 IN THE PRESENT CHAPTER

Gawhar-Sultān Khānum (d. 1577)	The eldest daughter of Shāh Tahmāsp; wife of Sultān-Ibrāhīm Mirzā b. Bahrām Mirzā Safavi; known for her piety and learning; supposedly wrote an introduction to a collection of poems by her husband.
Khadija Begum (d. beg. 17th c.)	Daughter of Shāh Tahmāsp; wife of Jamshīd Khān of Gilān.
Khanish Khānum I (d. 1564)	Daughter of Shāh Ismā'il I; her first marriage was to Amīra Dubbāj Rāshī; grandmother of Jamshīd Khān Rāshī.
Khayr al-Nisā' Begum (d. 1579)	Of the Mar'āshī Māzandarāni sayyid family; daughter of Mir 'Abdullāh Khān II; wife of Shāh Muḥammad Kh udābanda; <i>de facto</i> ruler of the Safavid state from mid-February 1578 to July 1579; headed a military campaign; assassinated in a coup organized by the Qizilbāsh.
Māh-Parvar Khānum (d. circa 1566–67)	Daughter of 'Abdullāh Khān Ustājālū and Pari-Khān Khānum I; wife of Mir-Sultān Murād of Māzandarān.
Maryam Begum (d. 1608–09)	daughter of Shāh Tahmāsp; wife of Khān-Ahmad Khān of Gilān; her correspondance with her sister, Zaynab Begum, and their mother, Huri-Khān Khānum, survived.
Pari-Khān Khānum I (d. 1551?, or after 1554?)	One or two (?) daughters of Shāh Ismā'il I are thus named in the various chronicles: wife of the Shīrvāngshāh Sultān-Khalīl; took part in the struggle for power after her husband's death; same person (or another daughter) was later married to Darvīsh Muḥammad Khān of Shakkī; another one was married to the Ustājālū amir 'Abdullāh Khān and took part in a battle fought by her husband.
Pari-Khān Khānum II (d. 1578)	Daughter of Shāh Tahmāsp; unmarried; counsellor to Shāh Tahmāsp; head of the pro-Shāh Ismā'il II party at the court during the struggle for power after Shāh Tahmāsp's death; <i>de facto</i> head of the state from November 1577 to mid-February 1578; lost her power to Khayr al-Nisā' Begum, on whose order she was assassinated.
Shāhzāda Sultānum (Mahīn Bānū) (d. 1562)	Daughter of Shāh Ismā'il I and Tājilū Khānum; unmarried; influent in politics; counsellor and confidante of her brother Shāh Tahmāsp; educated by distinguished masters; accomplished calligrapher and maybe painter.
Tājilū Khānum (d. 1540)	A Mawšillū Turkman; wife of Shāh Ismā'il I; mother of Shāh Tahmāsp, Bahrām Mirzā, "Pari-Khān" Khānum I, and Shāhzāda Sultānum (Mahīn Bānū); influential in politics.
Titī Begum (d. ?)	Of the Kār Kiyā sayyid family; paternal aunt of Khān-Ahmad Khān, the ruler of Gilān and a Safavid son-in-law; wife of Mir Sultān-Murād of Māzandarān; influential in politics.
Zaynab Begum (d. 1641–42)	Daughter of Shāh Tahmāsp; unmarried; corresponded with her sister, Maryam Begum, and their mother, Huri-Khān Khānum; later exercised political influence at the court of Shāh 'Abbās I.



## THE 'AQĀ'ID AL-NISĀ':

### A GLIMPSE AT ŞAFAVID WOMEN IN LOCAL IŞFAHĀNI CULTURE

*Kathryn Babayan*

*This chapter imagines the world of urban women in seventeenth-century local Işfahānī culture through the 'Aqā'id al-Nisā' (Beliefs of Women), a social critique of female beliefs probably written during the reign of Shāh Sulaymān (r. 1077–1105/1666–94), by a cleric, Aqā Jamāl Khwānsārī (d. 1122/1710).*

By the nineteenth century an 'Orientalist' image of the Muslim female pervaded western fiction and painting focusing upon the veneer of a veil, perceived as inhibiting, as well as the harem (a separate and promiscuous space imagined to house sensuous women, slaves to the desires of the sultan).<sup>1</sup> Western male imagination fantasized the harem as an abode of eroticism.<sup>2</sup> Although the veil and the harem placed particular physical restrictions on Muslim women of a certain social status throughout the lands and centuries of Islamdom, both enjoyed very different layers of meaning within contexts that bestowed functions and channels for the female sex to exercise political, religious and social roles, breaking through what may, from the 'outside,' have been perceived as defined boundaries between the private and the public, the feminine and the masculine, the passive and the political. Scholarship on the female sex in Islamdom has been tainted by these 'Orientalist' modes of understanding women and by other stock and voyeuristic representations generated by Muslim men, whose writings constitute the bulk of our sources on women. It is only within the last decades that a new generation of scholars has begun to rectify such misleading portrayals, attempting to understand the female gender in Islam from behind the veil and the walls of harems, from an imagined Muslim female perspective. As feminism has forced us to reclaim a

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space for women in history and to go beyond understanding them as mothers and wives, and as the tropes of 'Orientalist' discourse have been exposed, negative adjectives such as confined, segregated, sexual, and meddling, have been replaced by the more culturally receptive ones of modesty, invisibility, sanctity, and political sagacity to depict Muslim women in their varied contexts.<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to understand women as participants in Muslim societies, one must explore sources beyond legal theory, such as material relating to religious endowments, judicial records, court chronicles, poetry, and miniatures. These serve as the repositories for our shifting knowledge of the female sex in Islamdom.<sup>4</sup>

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This chapter tries to reconstruct the marriages, the social arena, the attitudes and the friendships of urban women in seventeenth-century local Işfahānī culture through a source called the *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'* [Beliefs of Women] probably written during the reign of Shāh Sulaymān, (r. 1077–1105/1666–94), a social critique of female beliefs and practices termed 'superstitious' by its author, the cleric Aqā Jamāl Khwānsārī (d. 1710).<sup>5</sup> Indeed it is a rare piece, for it provides a glimpse of women beyond court society where they are near-invisible in the extant sources of the Şafavid period (907–1135/1501–1722). Although we need to unearth sources on urban women before we can locate the subjects of this essay within their particular social and economic milieus, the women depicted by Khwānsārī seem economically secure. They had enough leisure time to stroll in the parks and to shop for cloth and lace in the marketplace, to turn their bath-house visitations into social events and to feel threatened by a female household slave. Nevertheless, the mentality that this cleric is shading as 'feminine' and 'superstitious' could very well have permeated different social strata. Since it is of women of the Şafavid ruling family that we possess a most clear and informed picture, I shall begin by distinguishing the underlying traditions in early modern Islamdom that formulated the roles of women in dynastic politics as members of the royal household.<sup>6</sup> I shall attempt to analyze the way in which the shift from such legitimizing traditions that awarded women an active role in the family affected gender politics within and beyond the court, as the institutions of the Şafavid state became more sedentary in character and more centralized in administration. In this process of centralization, and in the rationalization of power, the Şafavids, like the Ottomans,

came to rely on a legal and religious basis for their dominion, one linked to the promise and ability to enforce the *shari'a* [Islamic law]. Authority was being redefined in Şafavid Iran (907–1501/1135–1722), emphasizing aspects of sedentary Islam, more particularly in its *Imāmī Shī'ī* ethos, which was essentially patriarchal.<sup>7</sup> The *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'* is placed within such broad religious and political Şafavid spheres as it situates Isfahan, the capital city, in these contexts. The *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'* is to be read as cultural commentary illuminating the different mentalities that came to face each other as Şafavid society underwent change on many levels; for new paradigms and locations of authority were being articulated at court, redefining the Şafavid household and the whole imperial structure of loyalty. The humor and ridicule that permeates this account of customs, beliefs, and sayings of five Işfahānī female experts on 'superstition' are collated with other 'texts' on Şafavid women, not only to add more coloring, but to question the degree to which we are dealing with a masculine imagination of the age, and more particularly with a purist religious imagination.

#### GENDER POLITICS AT THE ŞAFAVID COURT

When the Iranian historian Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh (d. 718/1318) wrote his renowned world history, the *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh* for his patrons, the Mongol Ghāzān Khān (d. 703/1304) and Öljeytü (d. 716/1316), he apologized to his readers for having included an account of women [*awrāt*]. This break with Islamicate historiography he attributed to the Mongols who treated both sexes equally.<sup>8</sup> With the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in 656/1258, the ideal of a universal Sunnī caliphate lapsed, giving birth to a new era of experimentation and synthesis between Turko-Mongol nomadic steppe-traditions and Irano-Islamic ones.<sup>9</sup> Three centuries after the Mongol (Ilkhānid) conquests of Iran, Mesopotamia, and western Anatolia, when Iskandar Beg Munshī (d. 1043/1633–34), the official Turkoman court historian of Shāh 'Abbās I (r. 961–1588/1038–1629), was writing the Şafavid chapter in what was intended to be his universal history, he included no such apologies; in fact, he portrayed the active role of females of the Şafavid house in the political and cultural life of sixteenth-century Iran as customary and legitimate. Although by the end of his career as court historian, Iskandar Beg does chronicle a return to a set of legitimizing traditions emanating

from sedentary Islam, in the sixteenth century Turko-Mongol traditions were interlaced with Irano-Islamic attitudes and practices among the Turko-Iranian population of Şafavid Iran, and these predominated at court. Central Asian ingredients permeated the idiom of the classical period of Şafavid rule (907–96/1501–88). They are visible in miniatures, in the practice of sending royal princes to appanages with a guardian [*lala*], in collateral lines of the Şafavid house claiming access to rule during succession-struggles, in the role of women of the Şafavid house in the family enterprise, in diplomatic practice, and in the existence of a realm of dynastic law distinct from the *shari'a* [Islamic law]. The Tīmūrid, Turkoman, Şafavid, Ottoman, Tīmūrid-Mughal, and Uzbek idioms are distinct products of such syntheses and interminglings of traditions, each entity emphasizing a particular mixture. All of these early modern empires initially observed a Turko-Mongol conception of political practice in that they shared power, which was distributed in the form of appanages, among the entire dynastic house, male and female.<sup>10</sup> Thus, women played a formative role at court and in the imperial life of these dynasties. In practice, land belonged to the paramount ruling family as a whole. Like Şafavid men, the female kin engaged in politics to preserve the realm as their patrimony. Moreover, both male and female Şafavid blood was believed to be laced with a divinely-bestowed charisma. Along with their brothers, princesses in the seventeenth century were blinded for fear that they might lay claim to the throne.<sup>11</sup> This is a phenomenon peculiar to the Şafavids. In theory, then, all females, whether they were descended through male or female lines, could rule.<sup>12</sup> In seventeenth-century practice, however, female members were blinded along with males, except for three or four males of close kin. This practice which the reliable French observer of Şafavid Iran Jean Chardin terms “la politique Persane,” was exercised by the later Şafavids to limit rule to a direct and fixed patrilineal line of successors. But there is an example of a Şafavid princess, Parī-Khān Khānūm (d. 985/1578), who did aspire to rule in the classical age. The ambitious daughter of the second Şafavid, Shāh Tahmāsp (r. 930–84/1524–76), Parī-Khān Khānūm’s involvement in the succession politics that followed her father’s death reveals the extent to which the Şafavids regarded sovereignty as being vested in the ruling family as a whole: both male and female descendants were cloaked with

authority. Perhaps this particular definition of the *dūdman* [family] also invoked ancient Iranian notions of *farr* [New Persian] or *xvaranah* [Avestan], a divine grace bestowed upon the dynastic family.<sup>13</sup> Since both steppe and Iranian ideals of sovereignty saw power as vested in the ruling family, it is difficult to assess whether such ideas were derived from the Central Asian steppe or the Iranian heritage. I tend to understand it as an aspect of cultural reinforcement, where shared conceptions enhanced continuity.

At the age of twenty-eight, Parī-Khān Khānūm entered the stage of politics. During her father's reign she had been his confidante. "Particularly difficult affairs were entrusted to her because of the abundance of her intelligence and knowledge."<sup>14</sup> When Shāh Ṭahmāsp suddenly fell ill (982/1574–75), two years before his actual death, Parī-Khān Khānūm began to unfold her scheme to succeed him. She organized a faction opposed to her rival brother, Ḥaydar Mīrzā, another favorite of the Shāh's and the only male prince residing at court. Although Ṭahmāsp recovered from his sickness and Parī-Khān Khānūm would have to wait another two years before she could actualize her dream, the two main factions that would inaugurate a civil war (984–98/1576–90) upon the death of Shāh Ṭahmāsp (984/1576) had been forged, and Parī-Khān Khānūm represented the only Ṣafavid candidate around which the anti-Ḥaydarī cabal could take shape at court. It is true that, publicly, Parī-Khān Khānūm was acting on behalf of her disgraced brother, the future Ismā'il II, whom Ṭahmāsp had imprisoned for nearly two decades in a prison named Qahqahe [Cackle] in Azarbayjan (NW Iran). But Ismā'il II was merely her tool, for it was she who probably managed to eliminate him a year later once he insisted on ruling alone.<sup>15</sup>

Reactions voiced in the chronicles against Parī-Khān Khānūm's successful rallying of political support and her maintenance of order during the interregnum that preceded the accession of her brothers Ismā'il II and Muḥammad Khudābanda aimed at de-legitimizing female power. Ismā'il II voiced his discontent with the Qizilbāsh<sup>16</sup> *amīrs* [generals] who had been convening at Parī-Khān Khānūm's residence—indicating that she had a separate residence from the harem in Qazvin.<sup>17</sup> There, they had brought to her notice pressing administrative and financial issues. The chronicler, Iskandar Beg,



writes of the power she wielded among the Qizilbāsh: "not one of them dared to contravene her orders." He continued:

And most of the Amīrs, convening at the house of the princess Parī-Khān Khānūm, offered their services as per custom [*bi tarīq-i mā' hūd*]. They understood that such attendance enhanced the lofty rank and honor of kingship. The *wakīls* [deputies] of the above mentioned princess arranged for more majestic rituals [*ā'in*] and ceremony [*tūzūk*] and pomp [*tumturāq*] than during the days of Shāh Ṭahmāsp, and her attendants and chamberlains maintained order according to kingly customs [*bi-tarīq-i salātīn nazm u nasq-i dargāh mibūdand*].<sup>18</sup>

Ismā'īl II must have been furious; chiding the *amīrs*, he is supposed to have said: "Have friends [*yārān*] not understood that interference by women in matters of the realm [*umūr-i mamlikat*] is not worthy of royal honor [*lāyiq-i nāmūs-i pādishāhī*] and that it is shameful for men to associate with the veiled and chaste of the Ṣafavid royal house."<sup>19</sup> In an attempt to legitimize his right to rule over Parī-Khān Khānūm's, Ismā'īl II argued that females were not only unworthy of rule, but that their exercise of political power tarnished male honor. Ismā'īl II was invoking another set of traditions in Islamdom to counter the claims of his sister.

A century later, with the ascendancy of the prominent clergyman, Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī [Majlisī II] (d. 1111/1699) as the court-appointed Shāykh al-Islām [chief religious dignitary] of Isfahan, the purist 'ulamā' would attempt to engraft such attitudes about gender politics upon the minds of the population of Ṣafavid Iran. In his *Hilyat al-Muttaqīn* (1081/1670–71), essays in Persian on correct *Imāmī Shī'ī* ritual practice and behavior, Majlisī II quotes a *ḥadīth* [sayings and actions of Muḥammad and the *Imāms* recorded sometime after the death of the Prophet] which relates that Muḥammad said that if a man obeyed his wife, Allāh would condemn him to Hell.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that Muḥammad himself consulted his wives, Majlisī II introduces a *ḥadīth* stating that Muḥammad always acted contrary to such advice. He quotes another *ḥadīth* from 'Alī that reinforces such attitudes toward women: "A man whose consultant is a women is cursed by Allāh...."<sup>21</sup> Niẓām al-Mulk, the Saljuk *vazīr* and political theorist writing in 479/1086 at the court of the Sunnī Turk Sultān Malikshāh, refers to one such *ḥadīth* in a section of his famous *Siyāsat-nāma*, a book which became many Muslim rulers' guide to good government, regarding "those

who wore the veil.”<sup>22</sup> “Consult them and oppose them” goes the *ḥadīth*, according to Nizām al-Mulk.<sup>23</sup> He says that “in spite of all the nobility, the learning, the devotion and the piety of ‘Ā’isha (may Allāh be pleased with her), the Prophet (upon him be peace) did the opposite of what she wanted. So imagine what the opinions of other women are worth.”<sup>24</sup> Both Majlisī II and Nizām al-Mulk were referring back to the *ḥadīth*, those oral traditions about the Prophet and the *Imāms* which had been recorded in a context in which Islam had already moved from a tribal Arabian setting to a sedentary Hellenized and Irano-Semitic context—a context in which royal women were housed in harems and were legally dependent on their husbands, fathers, or male legal guardians.

But Shāh Tahmāsp certainly did not embrace such attitudes, for his sister Sulṭānim (d. 969/1562) actively engaged in international politics, and his daughter Parī-Khān Khānūm was his close confidante. Was this an argument first advanced by Ismā‘il II once Parī-Khān Khānūm understood gender-sharing of family power to mean that she could actually claim the throne? After all, the Mongol Ilkhānid Hülegü in 1260 had designated the female Abish Khātūn as ruler of the Salghurid at a time when there were no male Salghurids (543–668/1148–1270) available to ascend the throne. Although she was betrothed to Hülegü’s son (Mengü Temūr), in Fars coins had been minted, and the *khutba* [Friday sermon] read in her name.<sup>25</sup> Whether Parī-Khān Khānūm was creating a new tradition or acting within floating Turko-Mongol or Indo-Iranian theories of gender politics, in the power struggle that ensued after the deaths of Shāh Tahmāsp and Ismā‘il II, Parī-Khān Khānūm was acting as a potential Şafavid candidate for the throne. For her, that potential was real, and the Qizilbāsh courtiers paid her royal respect and obeyed her as though she was holding the imperial reins.

When Parī-Khān Khānūm once again assumed power after Ismā‘il II was mysteriously murdered, another contemporary chronicler, Afūshta-yi Natanzī, the author of the *Naqāvat al-Asār*, confirms that preservation of the throne was considered to be a family affair. Natanzī delineates the extent to which political participation for the preservation of Şafavid rule was seen as a prerogative of the female bloodline too. Upon Ismā‘il II’s death, he says that until the time that her brother, Muḥammad Khudābanda (r. 985–96/1578–88), arrived in Qazvin from Shiraz (two and a half months) “Parī-

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Khān Khānūm, as was necessary and proper [*chinānkeh bāyad u shāyad*], protected the throne along with the treasures and the other accouterments of sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> The Mongol tradition, derived from Čingiz Khān's *Yasa*, saw the first wife of the Khān as his official partner in the task of governing the empire. Khātūns administered appanages and during their life-spans could attain the position of regent, for it was Mongol custom that when a Khān died, the Khātūn governed the realm until the time that a new successor was appointed at the *quriltai* [council].<sup>27</sup> In the Šafavid case, however, it was not only the shāh's wife but his daughter or sister who legitimately acted as regent. Traces of Indo-Iranian notions of *farr*, of a sacrosanct family where one member was chosen or destined to rule, may have blended here with steppe concepts of sovereignty. Once Ḥaydar and Ismā'il II were both dead and the only surviving male candidate among Ṭahmāsp's sons was the blind Khudābanda, Parī-Khān Khānūm expected to be next in line—this time, without any hierarchical opposition, for blindness was considered an infirmity in Islam that disqualified a candidate from rule.<sup>28</sup> Yet Parī-Khān Khānūm had not foreseen that Mahd-i 'Ulyā (d. 989/1581), the Qavāmī-Mar'ashī wife of Muḥammad Khudābanda, would attempt to rule on his behalf. This Māzandarānī princess ordered that Parī-Khān Khānūm and her Circassian uncle and co-conspirator, Shamkhāl Sulṭān, be assassinated by her childhood tutor [*dede*], Khalīl Khān Afshār, who had lent his support to Parī-Khān Khānūm. Just as rival princelings were killed by their rival brothers, so was Parī-Khān Khānūm eliminated, this time by another female contender for power, her Iranian sister-in-law.<sup>29</sup>

But as the Šafavids began to centralize power in the hands of a single male of the Šafavid house, a new political theory that reserved and limited legitimacy to the patrilineal line of the eponymous founder of the Šafavid dynasty (Ismā'il I) was articulated: "Sovereignty and kingship is the right of Shāh Ismā'il and Ṭahmāsp's family, who having sent their dust-and-wind borne opponents to Hell with the fire of their well-tempered swords, revealed and manifested *Imāmī Shī'ism* and spread it throughout the world."<sup>30</sup> At the time of the accession of Shāh Šafī (r. 1038–52/1629–42), the first Šafavid to be enthroned in the imperial capital of Isfahan a century after the Šafavids came to power, Iskandar Beg was expounding a new type of political theory that was in the process of

replacing the classical Şafavid synthesis between the Turko-Mongol and the Iranian political systems.<sup>31</sup> According to the chronicler, what separated Ismā'il I and his male lineal descendants from other members of the Şafavid extended family was that their line had revived and defended Shī'ism in Iran. As propagators of this faith, Ismā'il's male descendants were the sole heirs to its dominion. With Shāh Ismā'il's establishment of an *Imāmī Shī'i* empire, the idea of an eponymous dynastic clan and a sacrosanct *dūdman* [family] was being replaced by the concept of a fixed patrilineal line in which succession passed to the next generation through primogeniture. Since the Şafavid goal of centralization could not be achieved within the framework of a tribal political culture, their Iranian and Turko-Mongol political heritage was being overshadowed by a new synthesis of Iranian royal and *Imāmī* temporal legitimacy. It took over a century, however, for such rhetoric to take on institutional reality.

The gradual shift to a self-consciously logical conception of political rule parallels the Şafavid public rejection of Sufism and other syncretic forms of cultural practice that in the post-Mongol era had moved beyond the textual norms of Islam. Such changes are also visible in Şafavid painting, where Turkoman influences with their tendency towards the unorthodox, exaggeration, a greater openness to foreign influences, and an intensity of color, eventually gave way to Timūrid formalism. According to Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, the excitement of learning and discovery had been sated, successful techniques had been integrated and thereby had acquired a kind of formal virtuosity.<sup>32</sup> With the intellectualization of art and its separation from the body, an age of dialogue between the steppe and the sedentary, the spiritual and the temporal, experience and reason, mysticism and theology came to a close. Formalism began to extinguish the free-spirited experimentation that had given birth to the Şafavid idiom. As Imāmism recast Şafavid society, Sufism and *ghulū* [exaggeration]—tendencies embedded in classical Şafavid religious culture—were characterized as heretical and thus striped of their legitimacy.<sup>33</sup> The *sharī'a*-minded *Imāmī 'ulamā'*, who aspired to a literal application of the *sharī'a*, were beginning their ascendancy in Şafavid Iran and would enthrone their ideals at court and in the *madrasa* [theological seminary] only during the reign of the last effective ruler of the dynasty, Shāh Sulţān Husayn (r. 1105–35/1694–1722).<sup>34</sup> The *sharī'a* would then be awarded a

supreme role in the formation of social order. This mode of thought came to propagate a constellation of intellectual patterns that permeated beyond religious dogma and practice. As Şafavid mores were being re-defined, a distinctive *sharī'a*-centered spirit began to transform attitudes toward the female sex and on prescribed roles in gender politics. The text under discussion, the '*Aqā'id al-Nisā'*', was composed by a *sharī'a*-minded cleric who was patronized by the Şafavid court at this very juncture in history, on the eve of the triumph of *Imāmī* Islam; it represents one such assessment of the religiosity of Işfahānī women.

#### THE RHETORIC OF VEILING: THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN LOCAL IŞFAHĀNĪ CULTURE

The '*Aqā'id al-Nisā'*' was written perhaps a decade before the accession of the last Şafavid ruler, *Shāh* Sulţān Ḥusayn, which witnessed a radical shift in mood in Isfahan reminiscent of the Islamic Revolution of 1979; the *sharī'a* would be enthroned at the Şafavid court.<sup>35</sup> An edict (1106/1694–95) prohibiting wine and all non-*sharī'a* activities, sealed by the *Shāh* and signed by Majlisī II, the *Shāykh al-Islām* of Isfahan, captures this change of temper in Şafavid public policy and in religious commitment. Along with the breaking of six thousand bottles of the best wine from Shiraz and Georgia, music and dance were to cease at all weddings and in male and female receptions. The veil was to be enforced.<sup>36</sup> In his contemporaneous *Tuhfat al-'Alam*, *Mīr* Abū Tālib Findiriskī states that *Shāh* Sulţān Ḥusayn decreed that contrary to past practice, women [*nisvān*] should not linger in the streets [*mahalāt*] and bazaars without *sharī'a* and customary [*'urfī*] reasons. They should not stroll in gardens and go on pleasure promenades with anyone other than their husbands. They should not loiter in public gatherings [*ma'rika*] or frequent coffeeshouses. And from now on, when they took their children to learn a trade or craft, they must not socialize with craftsmen. They were to move out of their private harem only with the permission of their husbands or their male legal guardians [*sāhib-i ikhtiyār-i sharī'a*].<sup>37</sup>

In the sixteenth century, very different cultural traditions and tendencies assumed formative roles in the construction of attitudes concerning gender and gender-differentiated space, for the above-mentioned decrees were reactions to the more eclectic and tolerant

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function

*darvīsh* culture of the classical Şafavid era (709–96/1501–88): a spirited age that had not only allowed for music and dance in weddings, for mixed female and male gatherings, and for women to stroll in gardens, public squares, and bazaars without their spouses, brothers, fathers, or uncles, but an era that enjoyed opium-houses serving beverages laced with opium, howling dervishes, skin heads with earrings, clad with animal skins, and mullas and sufis debating in the open atmosphere of the coffeehouse. It was also a time when the presence of the holy was felt on earth and each individual was deemed capable of realizing the divine. Contact with the supernatural was familiar to the spiritual landscape of the inhabitants of the empire, whether through the guidance of a mystic, a visit to a saint's tomb, through *şūfi* meditation, seclusion, starvation or, drug-induced hallucinations. After all, the classical Şafavid world had witnessed the royal enthronement of Ismā'īl I, the spiritual guide [*pīr*] of the Şafavid order who claimed to be the reincarnation of a host of prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad) and of kingly heroes (Ferīdūn, Khusraw, Jamshīd, and Alexander) from Iran's cultural past. "Prostrate thyself! Pander not to Satan! Adam has put on new clothes, God has come," wrote Ismā'īl I in his poetry [*divān*] composed as his adherents, the Qizilbāsh ['Red Heads'], conquered Iran and Iraq. It was not solely on the basis of his personal charisma that Ismā'īl wielded such power, for from his ancestor the *şūfi* Shāykh Şafī al-Dīn (d. 735/1334) he had inherited the leadership of the Şafavid order and hence the saintly aura and a spiritual legitimization that in early modern Islamdom was so intimately associated with Sufism and the *darvīsh* culture. Moreover, in the Anatolian context where Ismā'īl's grandfather, Shāykh Junayd (d. 864/1460), had spent over a decade (1448–59) in exile from Ardabil, collecting Turkoman disciples [*Qizilbāsh*], and engaging in holy war against Byzantium, the prestige of this family of saintly men had become imbued with divinity. Junayd is said to have claimed to be God and his son, Ḥaydar (d. 893/1488), who introduced the ritual red headgear [*qizil tāj*] that symbolized membership in this transformed *şūfi* brotherhood, the son of God. In an attempt to add temporal power to the already existent spiritual dominion of the Şafavids, it was said that the Qizilbāsh entered the battlefield unarmed, believing that the miraculous powers of Shāykh

Ismā'īl would shield them. Some were said to have devoured men alive in submission and devotion to their godhead.

But when Shāykh Ismā'īl conquered Tabriz with his Qizilbāsh (907/1501), he adopted the Persian title of 'shāh,' and began to be styled *mahdī* [apocalyptic messiah], invoking the *Imāmī Shī'ī* paradigm of an eventual emergence of the Hidden *Imām*. Ismā'īl's messianic claims came to be placed within an *Imāmī* framework. A Ḥusaynī (Musavi) genealogy was concocted for the Ṣafavids and he declared *Imāmī Shī'ism* the religion of his realms. This spiritual guide, who in his poetry claimed to be the manifestation of God, Adam in new clothes, and the essence of 'Alī, turned to Irano-Semitic traditions of monarchy and to Shī'ism, still tinged with *ghulū* [exaggeration], to govern his imperium. Ismā'īl I's public allegiance to the *Imāmī* faith points to an awareness that to unify and centralize his domains it would be imperative to alter the nature of Ṣafavid legitimacy and to forge a uniform religion: heterodoxies like his own had to be contained. As we have seen, what this meant eventually was that the Ṣafavids had to ally themselves with the 'ulamā' [clergy] and with an orthodoxy that was taking shape among them, defining themselves, as the orthodox often do, in relation to heresy [*ghulū*]. *Sharī'a*-minded attacks against *ṣūfīs* dominated intellectual discourse in the seventeenth century. In this process, Ismā'īl I's image as *mahdī* gave way to an image empowered by the *sharī'a* rather than by divinity, and so his rise to power came to be interpreted by the 'ulamā' as a sign leading to the advent of the apocalyptic messiah.

The erosion of classical Ṣafavid Islam was gradual. It entailed a long and bloody struggle involving two civil wars (930–42/1524–36 and 984–98/1576–90) that had to be fought before the Ṣafavids became true shāhs, for they were politically dependent on the Qizilbāsh. In the early imperial age, the Qizilbāsh had become the military and administrative backbone of the empire. It was only with the adoption and integration of the *ghulam* [slave] system and with the reconstruction of the Qizilbāsh tribal system that the Ṣafavids would feel secure enough politically in their new role as shāhs—and for Imāmism, colored by its Ṣafavid experience, to take hold as the dominant religion of the Iranian realms. Shāh 'Abbās I and his conception of Isfahan as the new capital of the Ṣafavid empire (1590) inaugurated this centralizing age. In this Iṣfahānī phase of

rule, the Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān (the 'Alī Qāpū palace complex and the bazaar) and the Masjid-i Jadīd-i Shāh objectified those who played a role in the process of making Isfahan into a capital city: *ghulāms*, 'ulamā', and Armenian merchants.<sup>38</sup> They represented the new pillars on which Ṣafavid power was founded. As the court became sedentary, the nature of male royal power took on feminine characteristics, in that the men too were secluded in the heart of the palace [*qafes*]*—*secluded, that is, from the battlefield, from the means by which they could assert their masculinity and control. It was through a re-configured harem household that the shāh now ruled*—*through slaves, concubines, and eunuchs. Both genders would now have to exercise their power through intermediaries, for the classical era when genders shared in the protection of their patrimony had lapsed. Now the construction of royal Ṣafavid power would emphasize patrilineality and patriarchy, principles central to the cultural matrix of Islam.<sup>39</sup> These two organizational principles of kinship found religious sanction through the ritual of coronation. Instead of the *Khalīfat al-Khūlafā*, a revered representative of the Ṣafavid order, placing the red crown symbolizing spiritual dominion on the shāh's head, the shāh was girded by an *Imāmī* clergyman, coins were minted in his name, and his name was called out during the *khutba* [sermon] of the Friday prayer at the Masjid-i Jadīd-i Shāh. Sedentarization had ushered in an era in which political legitimacy would be derived from temporal rule sanctioned by the *sharī'a* and through descent from a patrilineal line of Fāṭima's and 'Alī's sons and grandsons. *Imāmī* legitimacy may have also served the Ṣafavid will to limit charisma to the person of the shāh and to the 'ulamā', rather than to the whole dynastic family. Such legitimacy served as well the *sharī'a*-minded 'ulamā', who were attempting to limit the influence of *ṣūfīs* and philosophers*—*to reserve the role of intermediary between believer and God for the awaited Mahdī [messiah] and for themselves.

In local Iṣfahānī culture the shift away from nomadism saw the end of the era of dialogue between a variety of religious tendencies, ranging from those who believed in reincarnation to those who only understood the Qur'ān literally. *Ṣūfī* convents were ransacked; clapping, dancing, and song were prohibited during religious and secular ceremonies. Prostitution, both male and female, was banned. Intolerance reigned in the streets and in the theological seminaries.



As the era came to a close in which the cerebral had met with the intuitive, the body gave way to the mind and the boundaries between the nomadic and the sedentary, the spiritual and the temporal, experiential and rational, mysticism and theology hardened. By the end of the seventeenth century, the *sharī'a*-minded would attempt to impose their will on public order; to restrict females along with all other “profanities” to the privacy of the *andarūn* [harem]. As the *‘ulamā’* consolidated all channels of communication with God, the principle of patriarchy was being reinforced within the household—whether the household was royal, elite, or local Iṣfahānī.

The *‘Aqā’id al-Nisā’* (also referred to as *Kulthūm Naneh*) was conceived of at such a juncture in Ṣafavid history, on the eve of an age of orthodoxy. It allows us to reconstruct images from the world of the female denizens of seventeenth-century Isfahan: their understanding of friendship, scenes from nuptial nights, the expectations women had of their husbands, and the arenas in which they socialized in Isfahan prior to the triumph of the *sharī'a*-minded at court and in the theological seminaries. The *‘Aqā’id al-Nisā’*, ascribed to Aqā Jamāl *Kh*wānsarī (d. 1122/1710), provides a colorful view of the female sex through five token Iṣfahānī women: Kulthūm Naneh, Bibī *Sh*āh Zaynab, *Kh*āleh Jān Aqā, Bāji Yāsaman, and Dede Bazmārā. That these trusty practitioners of local custom represented a wider female culture is attested to by the author’s comment that “other than these five individuals, there are many specialists like them, but their mention would give way to wordiness.”<sup>40</sup> Inasmuch as the author of this social satire was a prominent religious authority [*‘ālim*] mocking popular beliefs, he divulges local customs and attitudes that in Isfahan had been synthesized with Islamic norms and practices. Too often, he seems to be saying that religious ritual obligations were being neglected in favor of social concerns. While ridiculing these women, Aqā Jamāl describes the options which women exercised in Isfahan despite their being in conflict with the *sharī'a*. In his preface [*dibācheh*], Aqā Jamāl delineates his audience as being “any women who is of age [*ki sinī dāsh-teh bāshad*] and who is inclined to superstition [*khurāfāt*]....”<sup>41</sup> We shall see what the author meant by “superstition.” The *‘Aqā’id al-Nisā’* is written in a genre of essays [*risāla*] composed by religious scholars [*mujtahid*] in order to clarify practice for those who questioned how the *sharī'a* effected daily life, and were to be emulated by seminary students

[*tālib*] as well as by the community of believers as a whole.<sup>42</sup> Even the language and style used by Aqā Jamāl is derived from such essays. “This is a summary” he writes, “of the sayings and actions [*aqvāl va afāl*] of women, and what they consider as among their obligations [*vājibāt va mandūbāt*] and prohibitions [*mahrūmāt va makrūhāt*].”<sup>43</sup> The five Iṣfahānī women who are awarded the status of experts in the field of ‘superstition’ are frequently and, of course, humorously referred to by Aqā Jamāl as “the ‘*ulamā*’.”

The book is divided into sixteen chapters categorizing what the author believes encapsulate the universe of the female sex.<sup>44</sup> From ritual obligations such as ablutions, prayer, and fasting to marriage and childbirth, he moves into female arenas of socializing, gatherings with live instrumental music, public baths [*hammām*], and the magical spheres of amulets and talismans. As he delineates in one chapter what is conceived of as proper female behavior by these five Isfahani women, he divulges the fluid boundaries in which women operated daily as they shopped for food or for clothing. Whether it is the improper uncovering of the female, her negligence in maintaining a modest demeanor in front of men beyond the family, or her laxity in performing ritual obligations, women are depicted as breaking the boundaries of the veil and the harem. Aqā Jamāl ends his book with two chapters on female friendships, which are portrayed as involving deeper, more passionate emotions than marriage itself.

The female reproductive role pervades local rituals in the ‘*Aqā’id al-Nisā*’. Female fertility lies at the core of numerous rituals connected with visits to shrines, and, along with fasting, these are invariably linked to the figure of ‘Alī. One of the fasts of ‘Alī (Rūzeh-yi Murtezā ‘Alī), for example, was particularly recommended for ‘girls’ who wanted a good husband.<sup>45</sup> And young women seem to have been very open and vocal about their desire to find a husband. Kulthūm Naneh recommends that they visit the famous minaret of Kawn Birinjī [Brassy Base] and recite the following verse:

O Minaret of Kawn Birinjī  
 I shall utter something, but do not be offended  
 My loins want a handle in them (*miyūn-i man dasteh miḵhwād*)  
 They want a man of commitment (*mard-i kamar basteh*)<sup>46</sup>

The French traveler and jeweler, Jean Chardin, who lived in Isfahan during his second voyage to Iran (1673–79), writes of this minaret

as being located in the district of Sayyīd Aḥmadiyān in Isfahan.<sup>47</sup> He notes that it dated back to the ninth or tenth century and was named Kawn Birinjī because some of its surface was covered with impure gold. According to him, it was sterile women and newlyweds who had great faith in this minaret. Whether women visited this shrine to request a good husband or a child, the minaret symbolized fertility. Chardin describes their belief in the power of this shrine as 'superstitious.' The ritual began outside the house of the parents of the sterile daughter. Over her veil, she wore a bridle of a horse. She held a broom in one hand and a clay pot in the other. At the mosque, she was helped to the top of the minaret, and as she descended, she cracked walnuts on every step and placed them in the clay pot. The pot and the broom were then taken to the prayer-niche [*mihrab*] of the mosque, and there the nuts were mixed with raisins. On the way home she offered this mixture to all the men she encountered, and whom she liked. She insisted that they eat her concoction. Chardin goes on to explain a local interpretation of this ritual: "Persians think that this will heal sterility, what they call in their language 'denomer le caleçon' [untying the pants], as we say in French 'denomer l'aiguillete' [untying the cord]."<sup>48</sup> The French historian of medieval and early modern France Le Roy Ladurie in his article on "The Aiguillete: Castration by Magic," quotes a nineteenth-century dictionary definition of the *aiguillete* provided by Littré. Littré says that the term *aiguillete* was used to refer to "evil spells intended to bring about a sudden suspension of some bodily function, such as the consummation of marriage." According to Le Roy Ladurie, "the *aiguillete* was therefore a magical device to induce impotence."<sup>49</sup> He traces this belief in witchcraft causing conjugal impotence from Shem to Plato, through Peter the Great's Russia, to seventeenth-century France.

The character of the witch appears in the *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'* in the context of those with whom it was lawful [*mahram*] for women to associate. The magician [*jādūgar*] and the geomancer [*ramāl*] appear in this category along with the doctor [*tabīb*], the cloth merchant [*bazzāz*], and the Jewish lace maker [*yahūdī-ye yirāq furūsh*]<sup>50</sup>—professionals women would encounter in their daily lives.<sup>50</sup> Witches, demons, and monsters pervade the *Shāhnāma* too and their representation in paintings from the Ṣafavid age is a Zoroastrian inheritance. People believed in magic and in spirits visiting and

intermingling with them on earth, and Aqā Jamāl confirms this when he introduces a set of amulets (beads, leopard nails, deer antlers) that were believed to ward off the evil eye, the workings of demonic spirits.<sup>51</sup> Aqā Jamāl even mentions the cultural meaning of ‘knots’ [*gereh*] in the context of marriage ceremonies [*‘aqd*, which also means tying the knot of marriage], where the five Iṣfahānī women insist that women should not paint themselves with henna [*nigār bastan*], for knots are intertwined in the painted patterns, and “that shall create tangles [*gereh*] in the affairs of the bride.”<sup>52</sup> The practice of tying knots to bind a curse is one familiar to Irano-Islamic culture, for the Qur’ān (Sūra 113;4) refers to mischievous women who blow on knots and mentions two angels (Hārūt and Mārūt) who revealed magic to the Jews and taught ways in which it could be used to cause discord between a husband and a wife (Sūra 2:102).<sup>53</sup> Such practices, according to Michael Moroney, were being adhered to by pagan communities in Iraq at the time of the Muslim conquests (seventh century AD), and their demonology survived among Jews, Christians, Mazdaeans, and Muslims. He argues that sorcerers were the “most typical practitioners of paganism” and that it was women who preserved these pagan traditions of magic, since it was through such an arena that they could continue to enjoy their religious status.<sup>54</sup> And indeed they did, for in the ‘*Aqā’id al-Nisā*’ Aqā Jamāl criticizes women who consider the channel of spirituality provided by a ‘magician’ more attractive than that provided by the ‘ulamā’, who are placed in the category of those who are denied access [*nāmahrām*] into female spheres (the harem).<sup>55</sup> According to these women, the larger the mulla’s turban the more he should be avoided.

Belief in magic even filtered into attitudes of the literate. Khwajegī Iṣfahānī, the near-contemporaneous chronicler of the *Khulāsāt al-Siyar* (1048/1638–39), who had originally dismissed as ‘charlatanry’ the miraculous claims of an aspiring messiah [*mahdī*], *darvīsh* Riḍā (d. 1631), reported that when his convent was ransacked “it became clear that all the luxurious items that had been seen there (gold and silk carpets) were caused to appear in that form through magic (straw mats and wooden bowls were found).”<sup>56</sup> Such insights into local culture indicate that the sacred and the profane coexisted side by side in the streets of Isfahan, in the public baths, and at social gatherings.<sup>57</sup> Just as the *darvīsh* culture served as an arena that linked a court functionary with a baker, or a Turk with a Tajik (Iranian),

At:  
Public  
woman

so local customs linked all these individuals with the tempo of, say, Kulthūm Naneh's religiosity.

These types of beliefs that are termed 'superstitious' also linked different confessional groups living in Isfahan. Chardin wrote of a famous shrine in Isfahan, the Harūn-i Vilāyat in the very same district of Sayyīd Ahmadiyān where the minaret of Kawn Birinjī was located. From his description of this shrine, one acquires a flavor of how the sacred and the profane coexisted comfortably in Isfahan, and how Jews, Armenians, Muslims, and 'heretical Turks' (Qizilbāsh) shared in local religious practice:

Il y a toujours là une prodigieux affluence de monde à boire, à discouris à prendre le frais, ou bien qui va en devotion au sepulcre de Harun Velaied, qui est proche de là, et qui est un des pelerinage des Persanes, ou l'on prétend qu'il se fait des miracles, et ou le monde, et surtout les femmes, vont en foule. C'est un grand mausole fort bien batti, selon corps saint, ou, comme d'autre l'interpretent, le saint du pays. Il n'a point de nom particulier, parce qu'on ne sait point precisement qui étoit ce pretendu saint. Les Turcs qui sont des mohametans hérétiques, les juifs et les chrétiens de quelque sects qu'il soient disent tous qu'il étoit de leur religion.<sup>58</sup>

The mobility of women, even when only traveling between female spaces, is striking, and the degree to which socializing, whether it be at weddings, during religious holidays, or in the bath-house, was given priority over religious duties demonstrates the extent to which women were participants in local Iṣfahānī culture and were active in formulating theology, synchronizing their lives together with their devotional obligations. Ṣafavid society was geared towards communal socializing, and women were exempt from performing their ablutions [*ghusl*] for up to six days if it would interfere with their make-up [henna, *nigār*, *abrū*].<sup>59</sup> A woman could break with the daily prayer [*namāz*] if she was wearing a new dress, if there was a wedding, a banquet with music, or if she found herself in the vicinity of a passion play [*ta'ziya*]. Although the *sharī'a* allows for Muslims to break with ritual prayer in the case of a wedding, other festivities did not enjoy such sanction. And wedding nights were not private affairs: chaste [*najīb*] women surrounded the outer walls and windows of the bridal suite, and there they listened in on all that was said and done. The nuptial bed had to be prepared by a woman of fortune [*nīkbakht*] who was not a rival wife [*havū*], had not married twice, and had nothing against men. On the following

morning the women could forego their prayers. Instead, according to our five Iṣfahānī experts, these women were to relate all that they had heard the night before and bring the bride to the gathering and dance around her. If the bride was a virgin, after defoliation they were to place her blood [*nishān*] in a platter and display it.<sup>60</sup> There were differences of opinion among the five Iṣfahānī women as to whether the platter should be of silver or gold.


Miniatures preserved in the *Houghton Shāhnāma* representing the classical age at the court of Shāh Ṭahmāsp (930–84/1524–76) in Tabriz, the first Ṣafavid capital, reveal a similarly fluid atmosphere. In all courtly scenes and scenes of encampments, female and male space is distinguished, whether separated through the medium of tents or of buildings. The fluidity and linkages between these two spaces, however, are implicit. These are represented, perhaps metaphorically, by means of a bridge which connects both structures, through an exchange of enticing glances between a women on the balcony of the harem and a Qizilbāsh in the outer court, or through the particular distance and perspective the painter gives to the harem in relation to the palace of men [*dargā*]. In the *Nocturnal Palace Scene* (see figure 1), Mīr Sayyīd ‘Alī, one of Shāh Ṭahmāsp’s painters in his court atelier, shows women attendants wearing white headscarfs working with men in two separate kitchens, performing the same nightly routine of dining and wining the royal household.<sup>61</sup> One of these female attendants is close enough to the *majlis* of courtiers that she can gaze into it. Peeping females is a topos that is used by painters of the *Houghton Shāhnāma*; in the majority of courtly scenes women are constantly observing and eavesdropping on the outer world of men. Secluded niches and elevated female spaces are constructed in these miniatures. Despite these spatial distinctions, an old *mullā* is seen in deep conversation with one of the royal women. There, in tranquillity, sleeps a cat; all three are separated from the preparations and entertainment transpiring at court. Perhaps it is in such contexts that female members of the Ṣafavid household received their education in the religious sciences and Islamic arts, a context in which the court painter, Dust Muḥammad, would have taught Shāh Ṭahmāsp’s sister, Sulṭānim (d. 969/1562).<sup>62</sup> Within their private space, women seem to have had access to things men enjoyed in public. For, as in the court chronicles from the classical age, in these miniatures women are

1 At (W)



Figure 1: *Night-time in a palace*, from *Shāh Tahmāsp's Khāmsa of Nizāmī* (1539–43). Courtesy of Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, gift of John Goelet.

depicted as informed and active participants of court life. In the bazaars, the public baths, and houses of Isfahan they seem to have enjoyed similar roles.

Female social obligations, in particular in relation to the extended family, are highlighted in the *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*. All five female authorities on 'superstition' agree that if the wife sees her relatives in the *hammām* (bath-house), she can skip her prayers and remain there and talk to them about her husband.<sup>63</sup> Social channels through which women could 'speak their heart out' with relatives or friends were considered sacred. In the domain of female public space, the *hammām* was one setting in which much private talk took place. Kulthūm Naneh believes that "whenever differences [*ikhtilāfī*] occurred between husbands and wives, the wife needs to speak about it. It is permissible if all her female companions join in and talk about their own sexual organs [*farj*] and laugh about it."<sup>64</sup> 

Women are not depicted as passive individuals. In the chapter on relationships between husbands and wives, Aqā Jamāl portrays them as having expectations of their husbands. "Know that the wife is content with her husband when he does not take a second wife, when he engages in conversations with her night and day, and when he fulfills her every wish. Whenever the husband leaves the house, he must buy her something." Bibī Shāh Zaynab says that "whenever a woman wants to go out into the street [*kūcheh*], to the public bath [*hammām*] or to religious schools [*madrasa*] she should not be prevented from doing so." And Dede Bazm Arā says "that husbands should remind their wives daily that if they want to go out for pleasure [*sayr*] and recreation [*tamāshā*] they should do so."<sup>65</sup> Inasmuch as Aqā Jamāl was deriding such female expectations, Iṣfahānī women played more than the obedient and submissive role the purist clergymen, Majlisī II, paints for wives in his contemporaneous essay on *Imāmī Shī'ī* practice, the *Hilyat al-Muttaqīn* (1081/1670), a role Aqā Jamāl would have also deemed more appropriate for pious women. For the *sharī'a*-minded, the best wife was one who bore many children, was chaste, dear to her relatives, humble in front of her husband, made herself up only for him, and obeyed only him. When the husband was intimate with her in sex "she should give to him all that he wanted."<sup>66</sup> The worst women were those who dominated their husbands, did not produce children, were vengeful, and refused sex. And according to Majlisī



II, "God did not deem zeal [*ghayrat*] proper for women, but reserved it for men."<sup>67</sup> Instead, the standards set by Iṣfahānī women preferred that husbands remain loyal by not taking another wife, despite the *shari'a* which allows for men to take as many as four legal wives, by remembering her with a gift every time he entered into the world of men, and allowing her the freedom to leave the house as she willed. *Khwānsārī* was trying to demonstrate how different *praxis* was from the *shari'a*. Tensions here are wrapped in cynicism. With the ascendancy of orthodoxy, the *shari'a*-minded like Majlisī II would attempt to impose prohibitions that would limit such freedoms and options for Ṣafavid women.

The five Iṣfahānī experts allow a wife to break her religious duty to perform ablutions in the *hammām* if she is threatened by the rivalry of a female household slave. If the woman's mother or one of her female relatives is not at home to keep an eye on her husband, or if they do not trust the husband, "so that God forbid if the woman goes to the *hammām* and her husband gets close to the slave [*jariya*] in that case it is obligatory [*vājib*] to break with ritual ablutions," for as long as a month.<sup>68</sup> In Iṣfahānī culture, sexual jealousy worked both ways. Although Islamic law on female veiling protected male sexual jealousy, in seventeenth-century Isfahani practice, husbands were not so secure. Husbands were even threatened by their wives' female friends. The '*Aqā'id al-Nisā'* speaks of a practice referred to as the "*sīgeh-yi khwāhar khwāndegi*," a vow of sisterhood which two women exchanged.<sup>69</sup> This practice of female bonding survived in Iranian culture into modern times, occurring usually between two women who were married and were friends, or who socialized in the same circles for a few months.<sup>70</sup> Emphasis was placed on women getting to know each other before the vows were exchanged. That they take a short trip together was preferable, so as to determine whether or not they were compatible. Loyalty in this relationship entailed dressing alike, frequenting the same social circles, not talking behind each other's back, and even inheriting from one another. The term "*khwāhar khwāndeh*" has also come to imply a lesbian [*tabaq zan*] in modern Persian literary usage.<sup>71</sup> In Ṣafavid times, this practice could occur between two women who did not know each other; no mention is made, however, as to their marital status. A reputable [*mu'tabar*] woman, who was trustworthy, a kind of intermediary [*pāsabz*], would prepare a wax doll called an '*arusak*'.

Having placed it on a decorated platform, she would then send it to the prospective sister [*khwāhar khwāndeh*]. To accept such an engagement entailed returning the doll crowned with a necklace and awarding the matchmaker [*pāsabz*] with an honorary robe [*khilat*]. If the response was a rejection, a black veil was placed around the head of the doll and returned. According to the ‘*Aqā’id al-Nisā*’, it was on ‘Id-i Ghādīr (the day ‘Alī is believed to have been designated by the Prophet as his successor) that this bond was to be officiated. They were to visit a shrine of an Imāmzāda [a descendent of Muḥammad through his daughter Fāṭima and his cousin ‘Alī] to announce their union, where dancing and drinking sherbet was customary. Kulhūm Naneh says that one woman should declare: “In the name of ‘Alī, the shāh-conqueror of Khaybar [*Bī Ḥaqq-i Shāh Khaybar gīr*],” and the other reply: “Oh God, accept and fulfill our desire [*Khudāyā matlab mā rā bar āvar va bipazīr*].” Once again, the figure of ‘Alī appears in a female ritual. It is true that ‘Alī is central to Shī‘ism, but he also plays a prominent role among the *ṣūfī*s as the model saint, the ‘perfect individual’ [*insān-i kāmīl*]. We may be dealing here with a female version of a *ṣūfī* practice that tied disciples together in a companionship founded on loyalty and devotion to ‘Alī. *Ṣūfī*-like *ghulāt* groups like the Yazīdīs, Shābak, and Ahl al-Ḥaqq embraced such unions that bound brothers and sisters spiritually during initiation ceremonies.<sup>72</sup> Vladimir Minorsky’s ethnographic work on the Ahl al-Ḥaqq introduced him to a document that pointed to the existence of confraternal unions in Ṣafavid times, referred to as *Ḥaqq-i qārndash* [right of fellowship].<sup>73</sup> Perhaps, there was a *ṣūfī* genesis to this covenant of ‘sisterhood,’ which may have taken on a life and character of its own within female spaces. All five female experts argued that every woman should have such a sister [*khwāhar khwāndeh*], “what hope does a woman have if she dies without one;” she will not go to heaven. And those who intentionally break with this practice, says Bībī Shāh Zaynab, are sinners [*gonāhkar*] and will die as Jews or Christians.<sup>74</sup>

Even from the confines of their homes, these kindred spirits communicated their most personal thoughts. Through a semiotics of cooking supplies which they sent to one another, they kept each other abreast of their moods and circumstances at home. Their language portrays an intimacy and a passion that has in

contemporary literature been referred to as “romantic friendships.”<sup>75</sup> A whole cardamom meant the female sender was having dreams [*hilm*], a cracked cardamom meant that the woman was in agony [*halākam*], a clove meant that she was burning [*kabābam*], a cinnamon stick meant “I adore you” [*qurbānat shavam*], sandal wood meant “I constantly smell you” [*Hameh vaqt mībuyamet*] and for those occasions of jealousy, perhaps, a particular seed [*anchuchak*] meant “god damn you” [*la’nat bar tū*].<sup>76</sup>

Women shared mutual relationships that bound them intimately in secluded balcony settings depicted in miniatures, or in the privacy of their apartments at court. In the world of the harem, women would develop friendships and share intimate relationships, some of which would have formed the basis for political unions. The chronicles speak of conspiracies that bound women of the harem together. Royal Ṣafavid women organized factions that had a harem following and together they would engage in court politics. Zubayda Begam, for example, was an active member of the harem of her father Shāh ‘Abbās I, and fought for the candidacy of her son Sayyīd Muhammad Khān Shāykhāvand. Her harem faction attempted to poison Shāh Ṣafī (1038–52/1629–42). Their conspiracy, however, was unveiled and forty women were reported by the ambassador of the duke of Holstein, Adam Olearius, to have been killed (1632).<sup>77</sup> And at the Ṣafavid court, female political power was not only what men feared. We are informed by Chardin, whose source on the inner world of the harem was a eunuch of the aunt of Shāh Sulaymān, that sexual intimacy among women was prevalent at court. Chardin speaks of sex and love between women. He refers to these women as “tribades,” women who engaged in same-sex relationships.<sup>78</sup>

On les observe de fort prés, de peur, dit-on, qu’elles se fassent des intrigues ou des complots contre leur rivales, ou qu’elles ne deviennent amoureuse les unes des autres. Les femmes Orientales ont toujours passé pour tribades. J’ai oui assurer si souvent, et a tant de gens, qu’elles ce sont, et qu’elles ont des voies de contenter mutuellement leurs passions, que je le tiens pour fort certain on les empeche d’y satisfaire tant qu’on peut, parce qu’on pretend que cela diminue leurs appus et les rend moins sensible a l’amour des hommes. Les femmes qui ont été dans le sérail rapportent des chose surprenantes de la passion avec la quelle les filles s’y font l’amour, de la jalousie qui y entre.<sup>79</sup>

Intimacy between members of the same sex, both among men and women, permeates the miniatures. The chronicles allude to young 'beardless' male companions of *shāhs* and princes. Men who sold themselves for the pleasure of other men were prevalent and public in Isfahan. Young Georgian dandies with long braided locks openly prostituted themselves in coffeehouses. Homoeroticism had become embedded in the ethics and the aesthetics of the Ṣafavid elite, and in the *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'* we observe that it permeated beyond the royal household. Here may be where the genesis of Orientalist perceptions of the erotic East took shape. Same-sex relationships were not only about sex. As we have seen in the case of these Ṣafavid "sisters," their relationships involved a sharing of things intimate and personal, a fusion of emotions, and antiquated friendships that are rare in the modern world.

In what ways would gender roles, 'romantic friendships,' the visits of women to the minaret of Kawn Birinjī, the ability of women to balance their social activities with their religious obligations, and the availability of social channels through which women could share their most private thoughts be impinged upon by the *shār'i* redefinition of classical Ṣafavid boundaries? How would tensions between change and continuity confronting the inhabitants of the Ṣafavid empire transform these cultural beliefs embedded in the *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*? How would the decree (1694–95) imposing Islamic garb, banning music and parties, and forbidding women to loiter in public areas without a male relative, be enforced by *Shāh* Sulṭān Ḥusayn and Majlisī II, and how would they be received? Answers to these questions remain to be explored.

#### NOTES

I would like to thank Nikki Keddie, Houchang Chehabi, and Robert McChesney for their comments on an earlier paper I presented on the *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'* at a symposium organized by the Paul Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and the Gustave E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA, entitled "The Marketplace of Identities: Cross-Cultural Themes in Seventeenth-Century Isfahan." A couple of paragraphs in this essay where I define the Ṣafavid idiom have been taken verbatim from two earlier articles: "The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," *Iranian Studies*, 27 (1994): 136–61; and "Sufis, Darvishes, and Mullas: The Controversy Over Spiritual and

Temporal Dominion in Seventeenth Century Safavid Iran," *Pembroke Papers* 4 (1996).

1. Such characterizations of the 'Oriental' female are embedded in the nineteenth-century works of, for example, Gustave Flaubert, Gérard Nerval, Sir Richard Burton, Ferdinand-Victor-Eugène Delacroix, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Jean-Leon Gerôme, and Auguste Renoir. For a classic discussion of such orientalizing discourses, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); also see Lynn Thornton, *Women Portrayed in Orientalist Painting* (Paris: ACR edition, 1994). I would like to thank Sussan Babaie for this last reference.

2. The diffusion and transformation of the idea of the harem in the European imagination is a complex and obscure phenomenon. It seems to have been derived from such works as Montesquieu's *Letters persanes*, which relied heavily on early modern travel-literature about the Orient (Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and Jean Chardin, in particular), all of which contain positive images of the harem. Here lies the dilemma: why, and through what process of transmission were these images transformed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? In France, the *Lettres persanes*, along with translated 'folk'-tales, like the *Thousand and One Nights* and the *Thousand and One Days* merged with the colonial mentalities of Europeans who by the nineteenth century came to eroticize the space of the harem, and to associate 'oriental' despotism and corruption with the sultan's tyrannical rule over his subjects and his over-sexed women. I would like to thank Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe for sharing her ideas on the subject, to appear in her forthcoming work, *Orientalism Under the Sun King*. For some insights into this diffusion, see Lucette Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

3. On feminist theory and its relevance to history, see Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) and more recently her *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare 1890-1935*, (Canada: Free Press, 1994); as well as the works of such feminist historians of France as Natalie Zemon Davis and Lynn Hunt.

4. See, in particular, Ronald Jennings, "Women in Early Seventeenth Century Ottoman Judicial Records—the Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 53-114; Haim Gerber, "Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City, Bursa, 1600-1700," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12 (1980): 231-44; Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Denise Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past* (New York:

Columbia University Press, 1996; Jonathan P. Berkey, "Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 143–57; Carl Petry, "Class Solidarity Versus Gender Gain: Women as Custodians of Property in Later Medieval Egypt," in Keddie and Baron, pp. 122–42; and Maria Szuppe, "La Participation des femmes de la famille royale à l'exercice du pouvoir en Iran Safavid au xv<sup>e</sup> Siècle," *Studia Iranica* 23 (1994): 211–58; 24 (1995): 61–122.

5. Maḥmūd Katīrā'ī, ed. *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'* (Tehran, 1349/1970). The work is frequently referred to as *Kulsum Naneh*. Maḥmūd Katīrā'ī made a valuable contribution to scholarship in collating a variety of manuscripts and early (*sangī*) editions. He also mentions (*'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, pp. 14–15) two nineteenth-century translations: J. Atkinson, *Kulsum Nani: Customs and Manners of the Women of Persia, and their Domestic Superstitions* (London, 1832); and J. Thonnelier, *Kitabi Kulsum Naneh, ou le livre des dames de la Perse* (Paris, 1881), as well as a Turkish translation, *Kulthūm Naneh Kitābī: Kitāb-i Tafrih Nāmeḥ-i Kulthūm Naneh va Ahvālāt-i Zaynab Pasha* (Tabriz, n.d.). I have not consulted these translations.

6. See Szuppe, "La Participation des femmes de la famille royale"; Shohreh Golsorkhī. "Parī Khan Khānūm: A Masterful Safavid Princess," *Iranian Studies* 28 (1995): 143–56; and Babayan on Ṣafavid women's involvement at the court of Shāh Ṣafī (r. 1038–52/1629–42) and Shāh 'Abbās II (1052–77/1642–66), part 2 of "The Waning of the Qizilbash: The Spiritual and Temporal in Seventeenth Century Iran" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1993).

7. The term '*Imāmī*' has been chosen over the more commonly encountered 'Twelver'/'Ithnā' 'Asharī' *Shī'*ism in the secondary literature to remain faithful to its early modern usage.

8. See the oft-quoted passage from Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh* (Tehran, 1338/1959), vol. 1, p. 133, originally cited by Shīrīn Bayānī, *Zan dar Irān-i 'Asr-i Mughha* (Tehran, 1352/1974), p. 78. Bayānī is the first historian to have traced women's exercise of power in medieval Iran and Iraq to the influences of Turko-Mongol traditions.

9. For this perspective on the post-Mongol world of central and eastern Islamdom, see V.V. Bartol'd, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasions*, 4th ed. (London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1977); Zeki Velidi Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giri* (Istanbul, 1946); M.J.S. Hodgson *The Venture of Isla*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); John Woods, *The Aqqyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976), and Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: the Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

10. Lawrence Krader, *Social Organization of the Mongol-Turkic Pastoral Nomads* (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1993); Mansur Haider, "The Mongol

Traditions And Their Survival In Central Asia (xiv–xv Centuries),” *Central Asiatic Journal* 28.1–2(1984): 57–79; Morris Rossabi, “Khublai Khan and The Women in His Family,” in *Studia Sino-Mongolica: Festschrift für Herbert Franke*, ed. W. Bauer (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 153–80.

11. Collective sovereignty is embedded in both traditions, yet Iranian political and legal culture placed a special emphasis on matrilineal legitimacy. According to Sasanid law, for example, a dead man’s successor inherited his personality, his name, his cult and his status in the agnatic group. If a dead man had no male heirs, his daughter could succeed him [stür]. She acted as a vessel, however, for she had to marry an agnate. Once again if she had no sons, succession would pass to her daughter. The Ferīdūn cycle of the *Shāhnāma* where Ferīdūn is separated from his successor Manūchīhr by a chain of seven *epikleros*-daughters is an example of this tradition. The Turko-Mongol tradition on the other hand saw the first wife of the *Khān* as his official partner in the task of governing the empire. The *Khātūns* administered appanages and could attain to the position of regent since, when a *Khān* died, until the time that a new successor was appointed at the *quriltai* [council], the *Khātūn* governed the realm. In the Šafavid case, however, it was not only the *shāh*’s wife, but his daughter or sister who could legitimately act as regent. Chardin, the seventeenth-century French traveler and jeweler, provides us with further evidence concerning female legitimacy to rule by virtue of membership in the dynastic family. Not only does he point out that Šafavid male descendants from both female and male lines were considered as legitimate candidates to the throne, but he also mentions the practice of blinding both female and male descendants so as to eliminate potential rivals. Chardin terms the Šafavid practice of blinding female and male descendants as “la politique Persan.” Jean Chardin, *Les Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse* (Paris, 1811), vol. 5, p. 240.

12. In the case of the Sasanids, two females, Purandokht and Azarmidokht, ruled—once again when no legitimate male candidate was left alive. Historians have often interpreted this as diminishing the validity of female legitimacy to rule, for it was only permitted in a context in which no rival men were alive. Nevertheless, women rulers emerged at such times, and the fact that female sovereignty was a reality—even if only upon occasions when the dynasty could otherwise become extinct—demonstrates its legitimacy

13. See Richard Frye, “The Charisma of Kingship in Ancient Iran,” *Iranica Antiqua* 4 (1964): 36–54; and his “Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Culture in Central Asia,” in *Turco-Persia in Historical Perspective*, ed. R. Canfield (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 41–42. On the notion of divine grace [*xvaraneh*] in Avestan literature, see Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 66–68. On the legitimacy of matrilineal descent, see Mansur Shaki, “The Sassanian

Matrimonial Relations," *Archiv Orientálnī* 39 (1971): 322–45; and A. Perikhanian, "Iranian Society and Law," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1983) vol. 3, part 2. On family law and succession regarding the *stūr*-successorship, where the 'son' and successor provided by the *stūr* might be separated by several generations from the man who was this 'son's' legal father and whose heir he was, by a whole chain of *epikleros*-daughters (in practice these would be the legal father's daughter, grand-daughter, great grand-daughter, etc.), see above, p. 654.

14. Iskandar Beg Munshī, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam ārā-yi 'Abbāsī* (Tehran: 1350/1971), vol. 1, p. 119.

15. Iskandar Beg provides the reader with three theories on how Ismā'il II was murdered. The first theory implicates Parī-Khān Khānūm who is said to have conspired with maid-servants of the harem to arrange that poison be inserted in Ismā'il II's electuary mixture. The second had to do with the Shāh's recurring colic. The third theory was that the Shāh had consumed opium mixed with excessive quantities of food (*Tārīkh-i 'ālam ārā-yi, 'Abbāsī*, vol. 1, p. 327). Two other near-contemporaneous chroniclers, Ḥasan Beg Rumlū (b. 938/1531–32) and Sharaf al-Dīn Khān Bitlisī (writing in 1596) also implicate Parī-Khān Khānūm. For a different reading of Parī-Khān Khānūm's role in Ismā'il II's death and in this princess's involvement in these succession struggles, see Shohreh Golsorkhi, "Pari Khan Khanum: A Masterful Safavid Princess." Golsorkhi believes that the chroniclers sensationalized the role of Parī-Khān Khānūm. This conjecture is debatable, especially since three historians corroborate her involvement. Although Iskandar Beg may have been using Rumlū's account as a source for his narrative, yet Sharaf al-Dīn Khān Bitlisī, an eye-witness at court who had been appointed by Ismā'il II as governor of Persian Kurdistan, was independently writing his history of the Kurds, the *Sharafnāma*, in 1005/1596 after he had defected to Ottoman territory.

16. The Qizilbāsh, composed mainly of Turkmen tribesmen, were the military force introduced by the conquering Ṣafavids to their Iranian domains in the sixteenth century. In addition to their military role, these Qizilbāsh were spiritual disciples of the Ṣafavid shāhs, whose ancestors had been the *pīrs* [spiritual guides] of the Ṣafavid brotherhood.

17. On the personal wealth of Parī-Khān Khānūm, see Maria Szuppe, "La Participation des femmes de la famille royale," 211–58.

18. Iskandar Beg Munshī, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, vol. 1, p. 201.

19. Munshī, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, vol. 1, p. 201.

20. Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (Majlisī II), *Hilyat al-Muttaqīn* (Tehran, 1409/1988), p. 81.

21. Majlisī, *Hilyat al-Muttaqīn*, p. 81.

22. Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāma*, trans. Hubert Darke (London, 1960), p. 185.



23. al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāma*, p. 188.

24. al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāma*, p. 189.

25. Shīrīn Bayānī, *Zan dar Irān-i 'Asr-i Mughal*, p. 11.

26. Afūshṭa-yi Natanzī, *Naqāvat al-Asār*, (Tehran, 1350/1971), p. 74.

27. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndamīr, *Habīb al-Šiyar*, (Tehran, 1333/1954), vol. 3, p. 8. For Töregene's role in the succession of her son Güyük, see Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh, *Jamī' al-Tavārikh*, vol. 1, pp. 564–67.

28. Although Parī-Khān Khhānūm had a uterine brother, Sulṭān Sulaymān Mīrzā, who was about six-year older than her, he was not considered suitable to rule, perhaps due to his opium addiction, either by the Qizilbāsh or by Parī-Khān Khhānūm. See Szuppe, "La Participation des femmes de la famille royale," 82–83.

29. For more on Maḥd-i 'Ulyā, see Szuppe, 24: 89–100.

30. Iskandar Beg Munshī, *Zayl-i Tārīkh-i 'ālam ārā-yi 'Abbāsī* (Tehran, 1317/1938–39), p. 87.

31. The actual transfer of the Šafavid capital to Isfahan occurred in 1598, but an earlier date 999/1590–91 has been suggested for its inception, see Robert McChesney, "Four Sources on Shah 'Abbās I's Building of Isfahan," *Muqarnas* 5 (1980): 105. I have chosen to adopt the date of inception as one that inaugurated the Iṣfahānī phase of Šafavid rule, for it also marks the end of the second civil war—the political victory that allowed for 'Abbās I to reform his domains.

32. Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, "The Safavid Synthesis," in *The Houghton Shāhnāma* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

33. The word *ghulū* (n.) is derived from the Arabic root "*gh-l-w*," literally 'to exceed the proper boundary,' hence, *ghālī* (s.)/*ghulāt* (pl.) is rendered incorrectly as 'extremist.' 'Exaggerator' would be a more correct rendering of the word. *Ghulū* is a technical term, applied pejoratively by *Shī'ī* heresiographers, and hence, employed by Islamicate scholars to refer to individuals with 'extreme' unorthodox views on the *Imāms* and the Maḥdī [messiah]. In his lectures, Martin Dickson emphasized both the continuity of *ghulāt* movements throughout Islamic history and their distinctive nature, which was nurtured by religious systems—Gnosticism and Zoroastrian heresies such as Mazdakism, Manichaeism and Zurvanism, in addition to mainstream Zoroastrianism—that were alive in Sasanid Iran before the advent of Islam.

34. I am adopting here Hodgson's phrase, '*sharī'a*-minded': "My term *sharī'a*-minded refers to a whole complex of attitudes characterizing those Muslims for whom the *sharī'a* has had an unrivaled primacy in religious life." M.S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), vol. 1, p. 351.

35. According to Maḥmūd Katirā'ī, the '*Aqā'id al-Nisā*' was written during the reign of Shāh Sulaymān.

36. Muḥammad İbrāhīm b. Zayn al-'Abidīn, *Dastūr-i Shāhriyārān*, (British Library, ms Or. 2942), ff 44a–46a.
37. Abū Tālib Mīr Findiriskī, *Tuhfat al-'Alam* (Tehran University Microfilm A4955), f 206a.
38. The Iṣfahānī phase of Ṣafavid rule also experienced an evolution in the practice of *musāharas*, the cementing of political alliances through marriage. *Musāharas* had been a tool employed by the Ṣafavid house [*dūdman*] to consolidate and legitimate power. Until the days of 'Abbās I (995–1037/1587–1629), these marriages had occurred mainly between the Ṣafavid royal family (both sexes) and the Qizilbāsh. Once Shāh Ṭahmāsp (930–84/1524–76) had suppressed the first civil war against the Qizilbāsh, marriage with neighboring dynasties that were, or were to become tributary states was introduced. Ṭahmāsp was expanding his realm. He had introduced concubinage to consolidate power within the hands of his fixed dynastic male line. Unlike the Ottoman system, male *ghulāms* [slaves] were not betrothed to Ṣafavid princesses. Instead, Ṣafavid females were initially married to the Qizilbāsh, or were kept in the family. Marrying Ṣafavid female descendants off to their cousins or nephews, served the Ṣafavid attempt to close channels of entry into the royal blood, thus bolstering the survivability of a single patrilineal line of successors. But by the reign of the absolutist 'Abbās I, *musāharas* with the 'ulamā' and *sayyid* notables had become the mode for female Ṣafavid marriages.
39. For an illuminating discussion by an anthropologist on patriarchy and patrilineality in Islam, see Elaine Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).
40. Khwānsarī, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', p. 1.
41. Khwānsarī, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', p. 1.
42. This point is made by the editor, Maḥmūd Katirā'i (Khwānsarī, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', pp. 7–8).
43. Khwānsarī, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', pp. 7–8.
44. The subjects of each chapter of the 'Aqā'id al-Nisā' are as follows: ritual ablutions, ritual prayer, fasting, marriage, wedding nights, childbirth, bath-houses, musical instruments and their occasions, marital relations, food for vows [*nazr*], amulets and talismans, those to whom women are accessible [*mahram*] and those to whom they are denied access [*nāmahram*], the favorable answering of women's prayer, house guests, vows of sisterhood, and things they send each other.
45. Khwānsarī, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', p. 7.
46. Khwānsarī, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', p. 7.
47. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 7, p. 446. For a biography of Chardin, see John Emerson, s.v. "Chardin," *Encyclopedia Iranica*. There seems to be a discrepancy in the dates of Chardin's two voyages to Persia. I have not been able to locate this minaret in Lutfullāh Hunarfar's *Ganjīna-i āsār-i Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān* (Isfahan, 1344/1965), although it must have survived into

modern times, for the editor of the *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'* quotes from Sadiq-i Hidāyat's *Narangistān* where he refers to the minaret of *Sar Birinjī* in Isfahan and the survival of this practice, as well as the recitation of the same verse preserved in the *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, by Iṣfahānī girls who visit this shrine (pp. 51–52).

48. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 7, p. 446.

49. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Mind and Method of the Historian*, trans. Sian and Ben Reynolds (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 85.

50. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 28. Chardin calls the ramāl, "les professeurs de la magie" who take their name from the famous magician/pharaoh, Rameses II. He states that men of religion approve of this craft, although there are those who see it as an illusion and lies, "...l'esprit human, sur-tout dans ces pays-la est sorté a la superstition." Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 4, p. 435.

51. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 26.

52. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 8.

53. Michael Moroney, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 388.

54. Moroney, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquests*, pp. 392 and 389.

55. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 28.

56. Khwajegī Iṣfahānī, *Khulāsāt al-Šiyar*, (Tehran, 1368/1989), p. 121.

57. See my dissertation "The Waning of the Qizilbash: The Spiritual and the Temporal in Seventeenth Century Iran," part 4, section 5, "Safavid Oral and Written Cultures: An Age of Colloquium and of Mixed Consensus."

58. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 7, p. 450. For more on the Hārūn-i Vilāyat, see Lutfullāh Hunarfar pp. 360–69. According to Hunarfar, the Hārūn-i Vilāyat was built by Shāh Ismā'il in 918/1512.

59. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 1.

60. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 13.

61. Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shāhnāma*, Figure 239, p. 184.

62. Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shāhnāma*, p. 119, quoting from Qāzī Aḥmad's *Gulistān-i Hunar*.

63. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 5.

64. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 18.

65. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 22.

66. Majlisī II, p. 122.

67. Majlisī II, p. 135.

68. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 3.

69. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 35.

70. Khwānsarī, *'Aqā'id al-Nisā'*, p. 62. The editor cites a certain 'Alī Javāhir Kalām who records such a practice among women from Tehran. Unfortunately, he does not include a source.

71. The editor quotes from Sadeq Hedayat's novel, *Būf-i Kūr*, where he equates *khwāhar khwāndegī* and *tabaq zan* [lesbian] (*Khwānsarī*, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', p. 63).

72. Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1988), p. 241.

73. *Qārndash* means a womb-fellow, a brother or sister born of the same mother, or a fellow and companion. Sir James W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon*, (Istanbul, 1978). Vladimir Minorsky, "Notes sur les Sectes de Ahl-i Haqq," *Revue du monde Musulman*, 1920, cited in Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, p. 242.

74. *Khwānsarī*, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', p. 35.

75. Lilliane Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981).

76. *Khwānsarī*, 'Aqā'id al-Nisā', pp. 39-41.

77. Adam Olearius, *The Voyages and Travels of the Ambassadors from the Duke of Holstein, to the Great Duke of Muscovy, and the King of Persia*, trans. John Davies of Kidwelly (London, 1662), vol. 6, p. 269.

78. The nineteenth-century dictionary by Émile Littré defines tribade as "Terme qu'on évite d'employer. Femme qui abuse de son sexe avec une autre femme." É. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue Française* (Paris, 1885).

79. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 6, pp. 24-25.



## WOMEN IN ŞAFAVID IRAN:

### THE EVIDENCE OF EUROPEAN TRAVELERS

*Ronald W. Ferrier*

*Observations made by European travelers taken in conjunction with local sources provide an interesting commentary and body of information on the life-style of Persian women in Şafavid Iran.*

Historical evidence derives from diverse sources depending upon the period and the subject-matter. Its subsequent value is influenced by its interpretations, taking into consideration recognizable prejudices and the particular importance of contextual relevance. Some modern scholars have expressed reservations regarding the usefulness and validity of the cultural observations of European travelers in Iran as historical source-material. While such reservations have undeniable precautionary weight, it does not necessarily follow that all such observations are worthless. At the very least, this evidence cumulatively reflects the spirit of the age in which it was written; by concentrating on certain aspects of the people, their life-styles, and the events of the period, it supplements indigenous sources. The late seventeenth century, in particular, was a very inquisitive time in European thought. Its cultural curiosity was not only important in itself for its own perceptions of the changing world-scene which it was busily exploring, but also because the information which was gathered continues to have significance as a supplementary reservoir of observations often missing from contemporary local sources. Persia under the rule of the Şafavid dynasty (907-1135/1501-1722) was one of those regions to be thus observed and was especially fortunate in the number of its European visitors and the breadth and depth of their interests, which enabled them, on the whole, to draw for themselves an informed picture of the Persian society which they

experienced in their daily acquaintance with the country, its people, and its customs.

In justifying the use of the writings of European travelers, it would be equally irresponsible not to recognize that real limitations to their understanding existed. These were not generally due to lack of first-hand acquaintance with the country or ignorance of Persia but rather to the nature of their familiarity with Persian life, which was mainly confined to the upper levels of Persian society in Isfahan, which was then very hierarchical. Moreover, as will become obvious, they had little direct contact with female society, although they acquired plenty of circumstantial information. Indeed, a distinguishing feature of Persian life was that it was essentially a male-dominated society, in which the role of women was positively restricted, as had been traditionally the case for centuries.

Indeed, the general condition of respectable women in Persia was conceived to be an unenviable one. During the reign of *Shāh Sulaymān* (1077–1105/1666–94), Dr. John Fryer (in Persia, 1677–78) dismissively commented that “the Women of this Country are in a bad State, where Jealousy reigns with such a sway.” They were not considered to have minds of their own and were not brought up “in those Principles from their Youth which should fit them to become prudent Matrons,” being only “instructed in the Affairs of the Bed, Banqueting, Luxury and Brutish Obsequiousness.” They were not permitted to meddle in “Matters of State.” Besides, “They have little care over their children nor have they much business with the Reel or Spindle.” They were not allowed to go outside their homes unattended and unveiled. It seemed “as if they were created only to be Idle Companions” for their husbands.<sup>1</sup> They were practically confined to the women’s quarters of their houses, the harem, where apart from the other ladies of the household, their constant companions acting as guides and guards were eunuchs, “transformed from Young men into Deformed Old Beldams.” The latter’s role was considered ambivalent.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the married wives of those in the upper reaches of society did not comprise the whole range of female participation in the life of society. There was a large rural sector living in a more communal manner in tribal associations up and down the countryside and in permanent agricultural settlements in villages and small towns. Within towns and cities, there were those engaged

in arts and crafts and industrial activities in a more organized manner, the life-style of whose wives varied according to their social position. Besides these women, there were an appreciable number who had contracted temporary marriages of one sort or another with various rights and obligations but who were generally subordinate in their respective households. At the lower end of the social scale were the slaves of both sexes completely under the jurisdiction of their masters. Apart from these recognizable female elements, there was a further separate group of prostitutes, who played a significant role as both the cause and the consequence of sexual license. Whatever religious reservations may have been expressed (and for that reason, prostitutes were excluded from Ardabil), they were ubiquitous elsewhere, and in Isfahan, according to Fryer, amounted to some 40,000.<sup>3</sup>

As for women in general, their appearance was admired. Sir Thomas Herbert (English ambassador in Persia, 1628) praised them as having "their hair blacke and curling, their fore-heads high and pure, eyes Diamond-like, having black lustre, their noses high, mouthes rather large then sparing, thicke lips and checkes fat, round and painted."<sup>4</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (in Persia, 1644) was equally impressed, for "On voit en Perse quantité de belles femmes, tant de bazanées que de blanches" [One sees in Persia a large number of beautiful women, dusky as well as fair complexioned].<sup>5</sup> He supposed that it resulted from the genetic variety which was available due to the efforts of slave-merchants to select the most beautiful girls for their clients from many markets. Certainly, there was no ethnic prejudice apparent in the choice of feminine company. There was, however, a predisposition on the part of the Persian male of high social status to seek his consort from among Georgians. Since the beginning of the Şafavid period, in the opinion of Jean Chardin (in Persia, 1665-77), "le sang persan est présentement devenu fort beau, par le mélange du sang geogian et circassien qui est assurément le peuple au monde où la nature forme des plus belles personnes" [Persian blood has now become very fine by the mixture of Georgian and Circassian blood and this is certainly where nature produces the most attractive persons]. As a consequence, "Il n'y'a presque aucun homme de qualité en Perse qui ne soit né d'une mere georgienne ou circassienne" which embellished both sexes; "Les Persanes sont devenues fort belles et fort bien faites" [There is hardly any man of quality who does not have a Georgian or Circassian mother....The Persians have become really very beautiful and of excellent appearance].<sup>6</sup>



Earlier, Herbert had thought much the same: "Their stature is meane but straight and comely, and incline rather to corpulence then leannesse."<sup>7</sup>

In the choice of partners for marriage, those involved played relatively little part in the proceedings, the woman almost none. It was in the fullest sense of the term 'arranged.' The girl in most cases would not have seen her intended husband before the ceremony and knew nothing directly of his appearance, character or prospects. Lifelong celibacy was an unacceptable state, regarded almost as unnatural and impious, whereas sexual desire had to be satisfied.<sup>8</sup> Men were encouraged to experience sex at the earliest practical age but girls were carefully protected until their wedding nights. The desirability of favorable social or financial alliances was always an incentive in arranging marriages. Marriage between cousins was a common aspect of Persian life, but a close-knit family-association of intimate domesticity based on monogamy was not required for social cohesion, although the right to having four wives was subject to the provision of equality in treatment towards them, in accordance with Muslim custom. Nevertheless, the legalized institution of temporary wives for fixed terms of cohabitation and the prevalence of female slaves with equal parental rights in respect of their children quite frequently caused emotional strains in the collective household, with its stability subjected to serious pressures occasioned by the usual frailties inherent in human life.

The arrangements for regular marriage were normally undertaken by an attorney [*vakīl*] between people of a compatible temperament and comparable social status.<sup>9</sup> The marriage ceremony [*arūsī*] took place in the house of the parents of the girl, whose father with his close relatives received the visit of his future son-in-law and the latter's close relatives. The father embraced the husband-to-be, set him in the midst of the assembled company, and then retired. The bride's father did not participate in the signing of the marriage contract [*agd-nāma*], which was the responsibility of the husband-to-be. With the attorney and a cleric in a separate room the contract was agreed to, witnessed, and signed. Then the bride surrounded by her female companions entered into a nearby room with a half-opened door, although still out of sight. Those acting for the respective parties declared their interests, stated the terms of the marriage settlement, and asked for the assent of the couple individually. Finally,

the cleric, confirming the agreement of the couple, authenticated the marriage document with his seal. The amount of pomp and ceremony on these occasions depended on the social status of those involved, as did the length and splendor of the accompanying processions and celebrations. Humbler folk might dispense with an attorney, and the bride-to-be might appear veiled with her father, exchange vows with her husband-to-be in the presence of a cleric, and declare her acceptance of the marriage terms.

After the wedding ceremony was concluded, in accordance with the financial terms which had been agreed to, the husband despatched money, ring, and presents of clothes and jewels. The wife offered love tokens such as toiletries, embroideries, and gifts of her own making. The wedding celebrations might last for ten days. On the tenth day, in broad daylight, the bride was sent her trousseau which, depending on her status, consisted of clothes, jewels, furnishings, slaves, and eunuchs, carried generally on camels, horses, mules or donkeys, and accompanied by music. Sometimes, to create a favorable impression, some items were borrowed or empty boxes were displayed as if they were full.

That night, the bride was conveyed to her husband's house in a litter transported on a camel to the sound of music, with dancers cavorting in the streets and servants carrying candles. The bride was completely veiled from head to toe and over the veil was draped another veil of silk or gold thread reaching to her waist so that her figure and appearance were completely concealed to prevent the jealous and envious from casting spells upon her.

Whil thus traveling from her old to her new home the bride was supported by a eunuch but on dismounting she was led by the hand by women friends. After gaining her new home and the wedding feast being ended, elderly women brought her to the bridal room and undressed her down to her underclothes. Shortly afterwards, the husband was escorted to the same room by eunuchs or old women in complete darkness. In this manner, neither husband nor wife saw each other. If, as sometimes happened, the marriage was not immediately consummated, the wife remained hidden in the women's quarters until the husband was ready or his wife's modesty dispelled. Invariably, the obligations of the wife towards her husband prevailed over her own sentiments.

Chardin, who was generally critical of the low esteem in which women were held, did not, however, disapprove of the manner in which marriages were undertaken. He accepted the practice of arranged marriages and argued that such unions where women were not seen before being wed were actually happier than those based upon freedom of choice. In Persia, because of rigid social stratification, there were few surprises where marriage alliances were based on rank and custom.

Divorce [*talāq*] was available to both parties, although in the case of persons of rank there was a strong feeling of aversion to husbands being divorced by their wives; for ordinary people, the loss of a wife's dowry [*mahr*] might entail some financial loss for the husband.<sup>10</sup> The proceedings for divorce before a judge were relatively simple: complaints were alleged and then judgment was given. Women might sue for divorce on the ground of their spouse's impotence.

If a husband repudiated his wife he was obliged to return her dowry but if it was the wife who sued for divorce she forfeited it. Remarriage was easy, and it was possible for the same couple to marry and be divorced on three separate occasions, provided that the wife married another man in between and provided that she had cohabited with him for at least forty days. There were, no doubt, grave abuses of the system by the unscrupulous in their determination to obtain divorce at almost any price and the husband held most of the cards in his hand.<sup>11</sup> Even before the dowry was finally returned, it was possible for haggling to occur, if the husband felt, on reflection, that he had overestimated his resources or believed he had paid too much in the first place. The bargaining could take some time to resolve and sometimes ended in death, if one or other of the parties concerned took the law into their own hands.

According to Islamic practice, there was another form of marriage (*mut'a*), a temporary alliance for a specified time with conditions duly registered before the courts.<sup>12</sup> A man could form more than one such attachment provided that he had the means, inclination, and health to accommodate them in addition to his permanent wives and slaves in the harem of his house. Some believed that this state of polygamy was 'un enfer,' a living hell. Raphael du Mans (in Persia, 1644-96) maintained that

les enfans de ces diverse femmes sont toujours en riottes. Il n'y a point d'amour point d'union ni d'affection...la vérité est que c'est pour eontenter leur concupiscence

[The children of these different women are always disputing with each other....There is no love, no harmony, no fondness. The truth is that the practice serves to satisfy their sexual desire].<sup>13</sup>

Du Mans and Chardin believed that obsession with sex had a physically harmful effect on Persian generation and fertility rates in comparison with the Armenian community, as well as being a contributory factor in the incidence of venereal disease, although this did not manifest itself in such a debilitating manner as in Europe.

After marriage, the circumstances and quality of life for women wholly depended upon the disposition of their husbands. Given the diversity of human nature, it would not be unreasonable to assume that there were many happy and contented marriages existing within the framework of relationships reflecting the prevailing mores. But there were also many wretched and unhappy partnerships. Such marriages were not the objects of public scrutiny: out of sight meant literally out of mind. "Unseene" as Herbert commented;<sup>14</sup> visible only to their husbands alone, as Tavernier remarked, and not even eating with them in their homes when there was an outsider present.<sup>15</sup> There was virtually nothing for wives to do in their houses which did not demean them in the presence of their attendants, slaves, or eunuchs. Hence, they gave themselves up to idleness of body and spirit, "faineantes dans leurs maisons ou elles ne se mêlent d'aucune chose, non pas du ménage...les femmes ne sont nullement maitresses, mais plutôt esclaves" [indolent in their homes, where they do not concern themselves with anything, not even with house-keeping...the wives are not their own mistresses, rather they are slaves].<sup>16</sup> According to du Mans,

Les Femmes qui dans no pais, sont les chefs de l'économie, icy sont des zéros en chiffre. Le long d'un jour elles ne font que tabaquer et piétiner dans un *haram*: leur plus haut employ sera á broder quelques toiles et estoffes pour se faire des hauts de chausse: tout le mesnage depend de l'homme

[Women who in our country manage households, here are useless at numbers. They only smoke tobacco all day and in the harem their most demanding task will be to embroider some fabrics and to line the tops of stockings. The whole household depends on the man].<sup>17</sup>

Persians took a fatalistic view of the world and preferred to follow the attractive persuasion of *carpe diem* than to worry about the

consequences of tomorrow. They were, thought Chardin, naturally fatalistic: "Ils aiment à jouir du present...n'ayany nulle inquietude de l'avenir" [They like to enjoy the present, having no apprehension about the future].<sup>18</sup> He saw them as being much inclined to sensuality, luxury, conspicuous consumption and waste, and for these reasons they paid little attention to thrift. They were hedonistic:

les plus grande dispensiers du monde et qui songent le moins au lendemain. Ils ne sauraient garder de l'argent, et quelque fortune qui leur arrive ils dépensent tout en tres-peu de temps...Il achete des esclaves de l'un and de l'autre sexe; il loue de belles femmes, il fait un bel équipage; il se meuble ou s'habille smoptueusement

[The greatest spenders in the world who concern themselves least about the morrow. They do not know how to keep their money and whatever fortune comes their way they spend it all in a short time.... They buy slaves of both sexes, they hire beautiful women, they have fine furnishings and dress magnificently].<sup>19</sup>

Tavernier noted that "les femmes en Perse sont aussi fort superbement vêtues" [Persian women are superbly attired] although in style their dress was similar to that of men.<sup>20</sup> They derived great pleasure from visits to the baths where they veyed with each other in adorning themselves in gorgeous robes and indulging in delicious repasts.<sup>21</sup> In this indolent atmosphere, there was little incentive or choice to be anything but passive objects of self-gratification. Even when their children were infants, slaves performed most of the more mundane tasks, while the education of their male children was the responsibility of eunuchs, tutors, and teachers.

Though they were subordinated in their marital and maternal roles, Şafavid women were not without feelings or will-power. They may not have displayed their feelings frequently but there was no doubting their effectiveness when roused. Chardin observed that

les femmes dans tout l'Orient, surtout celles de qualité ne s'étudient point à reprimer les passions ce qui fait quelles en sont toujours agitées avec fureur

[Women throughout the East, especially those in high social positions, do not concern themselves to supress their passions, which causes them to be always in a state of intense agitation].<sup>22</sup>

Funerary rites were the same for both men and women although the latter were screened from public view.<sup>23</sup> Their grief was expressed by uttering high-pitched ululating sounds which accompanied the

funeral processions: "they make great Lamentations; the Widows howling with their Neighbors and Relations" and "For three Days after their Kindred's Death they change not their Garments;...the Women shear their Heads, vow Widowhood, and go carelessly Clad, only in a Sheet or mean Dress."<sup>24</sup> After burial, there were grave-side wakes to which groups of women relatives and friends went, picnicking at the graveside. There were also religious festivals for the dead in which families participated with alms and devotions among the graves.

Persians were very superstitious in many respects regarding the irrational influences which influenced human events; they would not court disaster by starting activities on days or at times which were deemed inauspicious.<sup>25</sup> Women too were subject to many superstitions, particularly those connected with sterility, which was regarded as a disgrace and which justified all kinds of measures to ward off its evil effects. Chardin referred to two such instances. One was the celebration of '*Bahoura*,' a festival for sterile women, who frequented the streets all day, praying, fasting and begging for alms, which were offered to them in the form of edible gifts such as butter, rice, flour, and preserves, which they made into dishes for their benefactors. Distinguished and well-born women, who were forbidden to appear on the streets, despatched their servants to make collections on their behalf. It was believed that their husbands must have acquired some possessions illegally and that the wives could expiate the sins of their husbands through charity and thereby remove the stigma of infertility which afflicted them.<sup>26</sup> In another instance, Chardin was approached in the Hārūn-i Vilāyat (an early Šafavid shrine in Isfahan believed to be auspicious for sterile women) by a lady whom he took to be a high-class prostitute who, in the company of some others, offered him raisins and nuts. He had not long since arrived in Isfahan and, wary of the possible implications of being accosted by a lady of light virtue, refused her offer and passed by. He subsequently learnt that, far from any lecherous encounter being intended, his action would have seriously offended the woman, who was thereby deprived of an opportunity to cure her infertility because he had not responded to her simple charitable gesture.<sup>27</sup>

Tavenier, Chardin, and Fryer all argued that Persian males were particularly susceptible to female charms, Fryer declaring that

a voluptuous life was the only Benediction both on Earth and in their Heaven; and this squares more peculiarly with the Climate and Temper of the *Persians* than any other Nation.<sup>28</sup>

Fryer was convinced that “their Summum bonum is placed in such sensualities.”<sup>29</sup> Du Mans, as a Capuchin, inevitably assumed a more censorious attitude, reporting that the governing classes kept as many girls as they could support and presented some of them to their sons for their indulgence:

cette belle qualité de chasteté qui nous tirant du genre humain, nous apporoche de l'estat angélique, icy n'est cultivée que par impuissance. Ces gens cy sont comme Sardanaple, tous plongés dans cette fange [this admirable quality of chastity which we draw from humankind and takes us into the angelic realm is here only engendered by impotence. These people resemble Sardanapulus, all steeped in the mire].<sup>30</sup>

Yet, to flout the social conventions could result in savage acts of vengeance. Herbert alluded to the dangers of unintentional careless behavior during an over-night stay in Tehran:

the House where we lodged, topping all the others, from its Tarasses I could view over all the City, each house top with Carpets, whereon slept a man and his peculiar *Seraglio*, some had three, some sixe, others twelve female beauties sleeping by him. 'Twas indeed rashly done of me to view them. Their orders punish it, with no lesse terror, then by shooting an Arrow into his braine that dares to do it.<sup>31</sup>

This was no idle threat. In the reign of *Shāh 'Abbās I* (996–1038/1588–1629), one of his generals, “un homme jaloux jusqu' à la fureur,” [a man driven crazy by jealousy] was so infuriated by people overlooking his garden wall that he had several shot before, unfortunately for him, he killed a servant of the shah and consequently lost his own life.<sup>32</sup> Chardin judged that the Persians were prone to indulge in extreme sensuality and that their jealousy was proportionately more intense.<sup>33</sup>

There were, however, aspects of Persian life far removed from the self-conscious acts of superiority and the unruly passions of the ruling élite, although these are not often reflected in the literature of the time. An impression of a more relaxed rural way of life is revealed by Herbert when he quaintly describes an amusing riverside encounter in Amul:

The people are very courteous and the women beautified with complement and daintie feature: one day, when the weather was exceeding hot I went to the water-side (neere the bridge over which the night before we entered the Citie) where thinking by help of many Popler-trees to shade my self from the outragious *Phaeton*, seven or eight beuteous (but not bashful) Damosels suddenly, naked, came forth of the river to admire my habit, having never seene any *European* there before, some wonders at my clothes, some my spurres, others my haire (differing from the mode of that Nation) by which I became jealous of their honesty and left them, but by enquiry I perceived, it was an affected novelty, and when the men, (such time usually as the sun is in his Meridian), go to sleepe, the women then enjoy the river, and coole their heate, in both kinds too much abounding there.<sup>34</sup>

Fryer, Adam Olearius (in Persia, 1636–67), and Le Brun (in Persia, 1701) all received provisions from tribespeople on their travels without any embarrassment and at some places, as Fryer comments,

we were waited on by the Country Women bringing in Cheese, and Butter made before our Eyes, with no other Churn than a Goatskin in which they shook the Milk till Butter came.<sup>35</sup>

Le Brun also refers to foodstuffs being supplied in places in the south by “des femmes qui vendent du beurre frais, du lait, des oeufs and des bons poulets” [women who sell butter, milk, eggs and good chickens].<sup>36</sup> But Fryer found traveling difficult. Not only were the roads terrible and dangerous but the accomadation was wretched:

Coming to our Inns, we have no Host, or Young Damozels to bid us Welcome, nor other Furniture than Bare Walls: no Rooms Swept, nor cleanly entertainment, Tables neatly Spred, or Maidens to attend with Voice or Lute to Exhilarate the Weary Passenger; but instead of these, Apartments covered with Dung and Filth.<sup>37</sup>

In Şafavid Persia, prostitutes were ubiquitous. Because of the low religious esteem in which music was held, their activities comprised not only providing sexual gratification but also singing and dancing. This gave them great latitude for entertainment at different levels, the best among them enjoying celebrated reputations and a luxurious lifestyle as courtesans, while the lowest scraped a living among the poorest dregs of society. Fryer noticed succinctly that

There are costly Whores in this City [Isfahan], who will demand an hundred Thomands for one Nigh't's Dalliance and expect a Treat



them identifiable at first glance. Those who registered and paid taxes constituted a syndicate with its head and officers. Chardin noted that they were expensive, "il n'y a pas de pays...où les femmes se vendent s'chèrement: car durant les premières années de leur débauche on n'en sauront jouir à moins de quinze ou vingt pistoles" [In no other country do women sell themselves so expensively, for during the first years of their licentious activities one would not be able to enjoy them for less than 15 or 20 *pistoles*].<sup>46</sup>

The high prices charged by prostitutes were extraordinary for several reasons. With so many available, it might have been assumed that the market was sated and that the cost would therefore fall. There was ample opportunity to purchase female slaves, and each man who could afford them was permitted up to four wives. Temporary marriages were also allowed. On the other hand, *la jeunesse doré*, the gilded youth, did not have much money and were married off at a comparatively early age. European travelers assumed that the demand for prostitutes' services was to be accounted for because the sexual desire was stimulated by warm climates and also by the skills of girls who were marvels of enchantment. It was claimed with some justification that the ruin of many young courtiers was attributable to their pursuit of courtesans: "qui conque est épris d'une courtesane, ne la peut quitte que quand elle le chasse: et qui arrive lorsqu'elles ont mis leur amont au dernier écu" [whoever is smitten in love with a courtesan cannot give her up until she gets rid of him and that only happens when they have got him down to the last penny].<sup>47</sup> It was regarded as a devastating experience for men to be caught in the meshes of such women and the poetry was full of cautionary tales. Men would brand their bodies with marks of their ardent passion and the more extensive the signs of their adoration the greater their infatuation.<sup>48</sup> It was not only in Persia itself that such amorous excesses were indulged in. For example, *Shāh 'Abbās I* sent the son of a rich merchant to Venice with a consignment of silk to sell on his behalf.

Dés que ce jeune Persan y fut arrivé il prit un logis magnifique et fit tres belle expense, dont les Courtesanes eurent leur bonne part. Pour la soutenir il falut vendre une partie des soyes et cette dépense s'augmentoit de jour en jour.

[As soon as the young Persian arrived he took a splendid house and incurred a very large expense of which the courtesans were a considerable part. To support it he had to sell some of the silk and this expenditure increased daily].<sup>49</sup>

elles ont une agilité de corps incomparable, faisant des tours et des sauts si légèrement, que souvent elles échappent aux yeux, passant en cela les meilleurs baladins et danseurs de corde....Elles dansent sur une main et sur un genou en cadence, et elles entre mêlent leur danse de cent tours d'agilité surprenans

[they have an incomparable agility in their bodies, executing turns and jumps so nimbly that it is not apparent how it is done and, exceeding in that respect our best entertainers and tight-rope artists. They cavort rhythmically on hand or knee in and combine with their dancing a hundred acts of extraordinary agility].<sup>42</sup>

They were greatly in demand on all kinds of occasions both public and private. "Les musiciens et let danseuses sont les mimes ou les comediens des Orientaux. On ne fait point de fête en Perse et aux Indes, sans les appeler" [The musicians and dancers are the mimics and actors of the East. No celebrations in Persia or the Indies take place without summoning them].<sup>43</sup> They often traveled in troupes with their own simple transport and organization. The *shāh* maintained a group of twenty-four, the most talented of all, whereas in the provinces bands of artists usually only numbered seven or eight.

The most successful entertainers were well rewarded, and the *shāh* and his courtiers could be generous with presents. Chardin records once having visited two of the performers of *Shāh 'Abbās II* (1052–77/1642–66) each of whom was wearing jewelry worth 20,000 *écus*.<sup>44</sup> Invited back the next day, he wrote:

Leur apartment étoit fort riche et somptueuse et comme les parjums font la grande volupté des pays Chauds il y en avoit dans tout et par tout chez les courtesans.

[Their lodgings were rich and sumptuous and as perfumes constitute the supreme luxury of hot climates, the homes of courtesans are permeated with them.]<sup>45</sup>

The names of prostitutes indicated their fees down to one *tūmān*, which was the minimum, and if one was no longer up to the standard expected, she was discharged from the troupe and another took her place. While some retired with fortunes, many were driven into poverty through their extravagance.

Persian prostitutes were more readily recognizable than in any other country, although dressed and veiled like other women, because they wore a distinctive narrow band on their garments. Yet even apart from the fact that their veils were shorter and less gathered than those of respectable women, their demeanor and bearing made

them identifiable at first glance. Those who registered and paid taxes constituted a syndicate with its head and officers. Chardin noted that they were expensive, "il n'y a pas de pays...où les femmes se vendent s'chèrement: car durant les premières années de leur débauche on n'en sauront jouir à moins de quinze ou vingt pistoles" [In no other country do women sell themselves so expensively, for during the first years of their licentious activities one would not be able to enjoy them for less than 15 or 20 *pistoles*].<sup>46</sup>

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[As soon as the young Persian arrived he took a splendid house and incurred a very large expense of which the courtesans were a considerable part. To support it he had to sell some of the silk and this expenditure increased daily].<sup>49</sup>

It was customary for money to be enclosed when making assignations with courtesans. For dancing only, usually two *pistoles* were required for each dancer, although in reality and depending on the performance there was no limit to the cost. When the occasion was for an individual *débauche*, an agreed priced was also fixed in advance. The woman arrived on horseback accompanied by one or two servants and a footman, with all the paraphernalia that was required. Sometimes there were arguments. Chardin tells of a courtesan, who, offered ten *pistoles* by an official, claimed that she would not have come for less than thirty for the night. Eventually, she was paid thirty but only after she had been forced to remain for two nights and entertain all the guests of her client.<sup>50</sup> The prostitutes who were registered and paid taxes usually lived together in caravanserais where nobody else would stay. There was no renting of accommodation in Persia, but there was a notorious quarter of Isfahan known as that of the 'unveiled' or the 'bare-headed,' near the Masjid-i Fath Allāh.<sup>51</sup> From the early days of Isfahan as a capital city, "dés que le soir etait vsenu ces prostituees, comme des bandes de corbeaux, se répandoient dans toute la ville, et surtout dansles caravanserais, allant chercher pratique" [at nightfall the prostitutes, like flocks of crows, scattered throughout the city and particularly into the caravanserais, looking for action].<sup>52</sup>

As for disorders involving prostitutes, the evidence is scanty but occasional comments indicate that incidents occurred. One woman who prostituted her own daughters was sentenced to be thrown from a high tower and her body scavenged by dogs.<sup>53</sup> On one occasion, there was a quarrel between two courtesans one of whom slapped the other whilst they were drinking together in the royal palace. The *shāh* heard the row and the guilty one was discharged from the royal service and fined as a punishment.<sup>54</sup>

One of the significant issues in late *Şafavid* history concerns the political role of the women of the royal harem and its impact on government. Irrespective of the judgment of posterity, which has been less than favorable, contemporary commentators were strongly critical of its effect upon national life and the health of the monarchy. It was Le Brun's belief that *Shāh* Sulṭān Ḥusayn (1105–1135/1694–1722), the last effective *Şafavid* *shāh*, who presided over a monarchy which was "une des plus despôtiques, et des plus absolues du monde" [one of the most despotic and absolute in the world].<sup>55</sup> Yet *Shāh*

Sulṭān Ḥusayn was “élevé entre quatre murailles sans education, et sans avoir la moindre connaissance de ce qui passe dans le monde, comme un plante qui languit sur la terre, privée de la charleur vivifiante du soleil” [brought up within four walls without education and without having the least awareness of what went on in the world, like a plant which languishes in the soil deprived of the life-enhancing warmth of the sun].<sup>56</sup>

He had learnt nothing of history or politics or virtuous conduct but was abandoned to eunuchs and women at a young age and was exposed “a toutes sortes de sensualitez” [to all kinds of sensual practices],<sup>57</sup> while intoxicating drinks and drugs incited him to extremes of voluptuous enjoyment. On attaining the throne, he was subjected to excessive flattery and deference and guarded from the realities of life by ministers, who kept him in ignorance and pandered to his sexual preferences rather than encouraging him to apply himself to the business of ruling, which was perpetually abandoned in favor of pursuing his pleasures in the cup and the bed. Without leadership from above, the court disintegrated into factions and lurched from one crisis to another, while favoritism and expediency prevailed.<sup>58</sup> Chardin had drawn a somewhat similar and no less graphic picture of the situation during the reign of his father Shāh Sulaymān.<sup>59</sup> Under Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, factionalism and corruption passed for government. In this crumbling edifice of state, the harem represented a competing center of power. As Le Brun noted, “la volupté va toujours sontrain, et on va chercher les plus belles filles d la *Georgie* et de l'*Armenie* pour les conduire au Serrail” [sensual enjoyment is always on the go and they are on the look-out for the most beautiful girls of Georgia and Armenia for conveying to the harem]. The shāh was not content to await new arrivals for his collection; he went out to seek them locally and immediately:

Lors même que le Roi va á la chasse il fait mettre tous les hommes hors de leur maisons, quelques lieues á la ronde pour avoir le plaisir de chasser et d'aller á la pêche on de prendre d'autres divertissemens avec leurs femmes

[Even when the shāh goes out hunting he has the men put out of their houses for some miles around to have the pleasure of hunting, fishing, and making merry with their wives].<sup>60</sup>

Fryer had said much the same regarding the sexual appetites of Shāh Sulaymān, who summoned his courtiers to

bring their own proper Wives to Court, to remain there all that time prostitute to his lust;....From which piece of Service, no Man that is known to have an Handsome Woman to his Wife, is exempted: for after his Pimps and Panders have had the Scent, he is not long from the Hunt with a full Cry: To that end, in whatsoever Quarter of the City the Puss squats, he sets up his Crook, or Interdict, that no man presume to stay within doors, till he be passed whither he intends; but in the meanwhile, the Females are permitted, nay, commanded to stay at home....He lives like a Tyrant in his Den, [with] his Whores, with whom he commits Bestialities.<sup>61</sup>

When the shāh chose to go in procession with his women from the harem into the streets or countryside, it was "forbidden the Day before by a Publick Cryer, for any Man on pain of Death to invade his Walks;...The King, like a Dunghil Cock, struts at the head of the *Amazonian* Army."<sup>62</sup> The shah expected the Armenian women from Julfa to be compliant to his wishes, including on occasion the wives of the chief merchants.<sup>63</sup> The shāh had at his disposal the wives of all his subjects. Shāh 'Abbās II, having negotiated with and entertained Tavernier, offered him a choice of the most beautiful of a dozen courtesans, but after some *badinage* Tavernier declined the offer, explaining that his own concept of the married state did not allow him to take another wife.<sup>64</sup>

There were occasions, however, when the shāh commanded his courtesans to do things to which they took exception. Thus, on one occasion, he was drunk in the harem and ordered three girls to become inebriated also but after several requests they still refused. He was so furious at this defiance that he had them bound and thrown onto a great fire where they were burnt alive.<sup>65</sup> The same thing happened on another occasion when a girl refused to drink wine and was likewise condemned to be burnt alive. The eunuch who was entrusted with her death took pity on her and thinking that she would be pardoned when the shāh awoke, did not carry out the sentence. For his mercy, he was rewarded with his own death and the girl was reprieved. Such could be the arbitrary nature of the shāh's justice.<sup>66</sup>

In the reign of Shāh Sulaymān one of the troupe of royal dancers fell in love with the shāh's favorite courtier, Naṣr 'Alī Beg. Her absence from court entertainments was noticed by Shāh Sulaymān

who was very fond of her. When she appeared next, the shāh questioned her about her absence, which she claimed was because of ill health. The shāh implied that she had made a remarkably quick recovery, but she explained that her cure was wine, which she had drunk at home. The shāh, however, disbelieved her story and ultimately she confessed to drinking with Naṣr 'Alī Beg. Feigning indifference, the shāh persuaded her to reveal secrets about her lover. Finally, furious at the insolence of his favorite courtier in making off with one of his dancers, he resolved to revenge himself on all the women of the troupe, whom he turned into common prostitutes and distributed among his guards.<sup>67</sup>

Shāh Sulaymān, when he first came to the throne, had only seen women and eunuchs and knew nothing of 'l'art de regner' [the art of ruling] and in that spirit he began his rule: "le jeune monarque ne refusoit rien à ses femmes ni à ses sens" [the young monarch denied nothing to his women nor to his inclinations].<sup>68</sup> It was not long before the queen-mother gained a decisive ascendancy over him and with the connivance of his first chief minister, Sarū Taqī, effectively ran the government from the harem, which she dominated as a veritable *virago*.<sup>69</sup> From time to time, often on the recommendation of the queen-mother, the harem was purged of expendable women, many of whom were married off to officials. Sometimes the shāh, being vindictive, had them disposed of in as degrading a way as possible. A noble Circassian girl who had incurred the shāh's displeasure was married off to the son of the royal launderer. To the shāh's annoyance, however, the couple were not unhappy. When the launderer died, the son applied for his father's position. The shāh, seething with anger, asked him if he had celebrated his good luck in making such a fortunate match. The young man confessed that he had been too poor to do so, so the shāh ordered a celebration: the man's body was stretched on a plank and riddled with holes in which were inserted wicks and oil, like candles, and set alight. This horrible action was regarded by Chardin as an example of "la fureur de l'amour porte ces princes orientaux, dont le pouvoir n'a d'autre guide ni d'autres bornes q'un caprice emporté" [the frenzy of love which incites these oriental princes whose power has no other guides nor limits than caprice].<sup>70</sup>

The harem was, inevitably, a place of profound emotions and charged sexuality, where lesbian affairs or flirtations with eunuchs

were not only substitutes for the master's inattention, but also experiences and emotions independent of his control. There was, for example, the case of the queen-mother, widow of Shāh 'Abbās II and the mother of Shāh Sulaymān. The succession, unusually, was a disputed one within the council of state, which was held in Qazvin. When the decision was eventually made known in Isfahan, it was hardly believed and the scene was set for a Racine-like drama of heart pitted against duty. The queen-mother had long been estranged from her late husband, who had left two eligible sons by different wives. She was convinced that the eunuch emissary from Qazvin had orders to put her son to death. In the elaborate interplay of eunuchs of the harem and court officials, the queen-mother was vulnerable and beset with contradictory impressions of horror, sadness, and defiance as she sought to protect her son. Sorrow was mixed with anger, cries for mercy mingled with insults. Finally, in a desperate gesture of resignation, she allowed her son to be taken away and acknowledged as shāh, but not before seizing the eunuch's sword and making him swear that he would guarantee her son's life, or lose his own if he failed. The young shāh, terrified, let himself be taken away in tears from the harem to assume his responsibilities.

The example of Shāh Sulaymān's mother shows the force that could be directed from the harem. Not only did she make her presence felt at the highest level of government affairs but she involved herself in the private life of her son. On one occasion, she insisted that he break with a girl of high rank with whom he had become enamored and had her married off to an unsuitable husband. Since there was no disputing the queen-mother's command, once the marriage contract had been signed, the luckless man was trussed-up and battered to death by assailants hired by the girl. The shāh was informed that since she could no longer have the finest of lovers, she would not put up with the meanest of husbands. The shāh was flattered by her sentiments and pardoned her, although the queen-mother was mortified by her son's defiance.<sup>71</sup>

Just as the shah had his official gardens and pleasure parks, so did the royal women have their own, such as that of the mother of Shāh Sultān Ḥusayn, where Le Brun once spent an enjoyable couple of days fishing and shooting pigeons.<sup>72</sup> The mother of Shāh Sulaymān owned a bazaar in Isfahan. Indeed, prominent women were much involved with building projects, like the mother of the



Khān of Lār who built a caravanserai at Behrī on the way to Gombroom in the time of Shāh ‘Abbās I which was “un des plus beaux, et des plus spacieux de la Perse”<sup>73</sup> [one of the finest and roomiest in Persia].

Often, female members of the royal family distinguished themselves through the power which they wielded, however indirectly, and through the strength of their personalities. Shāh ‘Abbās II had two sisters, one of whom, Hava Begam, had been married to a *sadr* [a leading cleric], by whom she had a son, Mīrzā Riḍā, who was a distinguished member of Isfahan society. After her husband died young, she married again, to another *sadr*, and had two more sons. All three children were blinded because of their closeness to the throne, in conformity with Ṣafavid practice. Hava Begam was a woman of wider than usual interests of which there were probably more than appear in the sources. Chardin’s dealings with her over jewels and the payments for them were very satisfactory and amicable. She and her husband were anxious when Chardin fell ill and sent to him presents of fruits, preserves, and sweets.<sup>74</sup>

It would take us beyond the bounds of this chapter to describe in more detail the organization of the harem, its location within the royal palace, its complement of eunuchs, and its impact upon the social and political life of the Ṣafavid state, but historians such as Vladamir Minorsky have judged its influence to have been one of the main causes of Ṣafavid decline.<sup>75</sup> He declared that “the irresponsible character of the ‘shadow government’ represented by the harem, the Queen Mother, and the eunuchs” contributed to the ‘degeneration of the dynasty whose scions were brought up in the atmosphere of the harem, in complete ignorance of the outside world.”<sup>76</sup>

## NOTES

1. John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia being Nine Years' Travels*, 1672–81 ed., William Crook (London: Hakluyt Society, second series no. 39, 1915), vol.3, p. 127.
2. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, p. 126.
3. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, p. 129.
4. Thomas Herbert, *A Relation of Some Yeares Travaile Begunne Anno 1626*, (London: William Stansby and Jacob Bloome, 1634), p. 147.
5. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Voyages en Turque, en Perse et aux Indes*, 5 vols., (Rouen: Jean Baptiste Machuel, 1724), vol. 2, p. 368.
6. Jean Chardin, *Voyages en Perse et autres Lieux de l'Orient*, (Paris: L. Langlés, 1811), vol. 3, p. 404. For Chardin's view of Persia see also R.W. Ferrier, *A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-century Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996).
7. Herbert, *A Relation*, p. 147.
8. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 217.
9. Information on marriage is derived primarily from Chardin, vol. 2, pp. 217–41; and Raphaël Du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1890), pp. 115–23.
10. O. Spies, s.v. "Mahr," *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), pp. 314–15.
11. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, vol.3, pp. 106–07 and Tavernier, p. 388.
12. Shahla Haeri, *Law of Desire: Temporary Marriage in Shi'i Iran*, (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1989), and W. Heffening, s.v. "Mut 'a," *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, pp. 418–20.
13. Du Mans, *Estat*, pp. 122–23.
14. Herbert, *A Relation*, p. 147.
15. Tavernier, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 368–69.
16. Tavernier, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 369.
17. Du Mans, *Estat*, p. 107.
18. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 3, p. 405.
19. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 3, p. 407.
20. Tavernier, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 367.
21. Du Mans, *Estat*, pp. 142–48.
22. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 7, p. 314.
23. Du Mans, *Estat*, pp. 88–91.
24. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, vol. 3, p. 130.
25. Regarding astrologers, the *shāh*, for example, "en a toujours trois on quatre au prés de sa personne pour lui dire de la bonne on la mauvaise heure" [always has three or four close to himself to tell him the time that is most auspicious or not] in Tavernier, *Voyages*, p. 350.
26. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 9, pp. 117–20.
27. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 7, pp. 447–48.

28. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, vol. 3, p. 112.
29. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, vol. 3, p. 112.
30. Du Mans, *Estat*, p. 125.
31. Herbert, *A Relation*, p. 115. See also Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, p. 130.
32. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 4, pp. 429–30.
33. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 3, pp. 414–15.
34. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 205–06.
35. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, vol. 2, p. 130.
36. Cornelius Le Brun, *Voyages par la Moscovie en Perse, et aux Indes Orientales*, 2 vols., (Amsterdam: Freres Wetstein, 1718), vol. 2, pp. 318–19.
37. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, vol. 2, p. 184.
38. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, vol. 3, p. 178.
39. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 7, p. 411.
40. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 7, p. 414.
41. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 205.
42. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 206.
43. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 207.
44. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 210.
45. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 210.
46. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 212.
47. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 212.
48. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 213.
49. Tavernier, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 69.
50. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 214–15.
51. There are many references to this 'red light' district. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 215–16 and vol. 7, p. 417.
52. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 216.
53. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 6, p. 117.
54. Tavernier, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 191–92.
55. Le Brun, *Voyages*, vol. 1, p. 205.
56. Le Brun, *Voyages*, vol. 1, p. 206.
57. Le Brun, *Voyages*, vol. 1, p. 206.
58. Le Brun, *Voyages*, vol. 1, pp. 206–08.
59. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 6, p. 117.
60. Le Brun, *Voyages*, vol. 1, p. 206.
61. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, pp. 41–42.
62. Fryer, *A New Account of East India*, pp. 53.
63. Du Mans, *Estat*, p. 28.
64. Tavernier, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 187–88.
65. Tavernier, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 215.
66. Tavernier, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 215–16.
67. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 86.
68. Tavernier, *Voyages*, p. 220.

69. His mother "pour laquelle il [the *shāh*] a un extrême respect, et qu'on peut dire être plus que sa gouvernante, lui en parla plus librement que personne, et lui fit trouver bon qu'elle se mêlat du gouvernement. Elle prit donc le soin ses affaires" [for whom he has an unlimited regard and who, one can say, is more than his guardian and speaks more candidly to him than anyone and who finds it appropriate that she intervenes in government. So she takes care of affairs] in Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 9, p. 86.

70. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 9, pp. 328–29.

71. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 9, pp. 324–27.

72. Le Brun, *Voyages*, vol. 2, p. 303.

73. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 8, p. 477.

74. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 8, pp. 47–48.

75. V. Minorsky, *Tadhkirat al-Muluk* (London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, Luzac and Co., 1943), p. 23.

76. For a comparative understanding of the position of contemporary European, especially English, women, see Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel, Women's Lot in Seventeenth-Century England*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984).

77. Taking into account the descriptions of Chardin and Tavernier, the two most important traveling traders of their time, it is possible to give a general idea of the coinage then in circulation and the prevalent values.

78. Not an actual coin but an accounting unit denoting a sum contained in a cylindrical leather purse of 50 *'abbāsī* for general usage.

79. A hairpin-shaped silver piece minted in the former Kingdom of Lār circulating throughout the regions of the Persian Gulf.

APPENDIX:  
 TABLE OF CONTEMPORARY COINAGE AND ITS VALUES  
 TOWARD THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY IN PERSIA<sup>77</sup>

PERSIAN (silver)		
1 maḥmudī	2 shāhī	
1 tūmān <sup>78</sup>	50 'abbāsī	
5 qazbak	1 shāhī	
1 'abbāsī	4 shāhī	
1 shāhī	2 <sup>1/2</sup> bistī	
lārīn <sup>79</sup>	2 <sup>1/2</sup> shāhī	
FRENCH		
1 livre tournois, franc	20 sou	
1 écu (crown)	3 livre	
1 louis d'or	24 livre	
1 pistole	10 livre	
1 sou	= 12 denier =	4 liard
PERSIAN	FRENCH	ENGLISH
1 maḥmudī	9 sou	8d
1 tūmān	50 livre	£3 6s 8d
1 'abbāsī	18 sou	1s 4d
1 shāhī	4 <sup>1/2</sup> sou	4d
lārīn	9-11 sou	
	1 livre	18-19 <sup>1/2</sup> d

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE URBAN LANDSCAPE:  
WOMEN BUILDERS IN ŞAFAVID ISFAHAN  
AND MUGHAL SHAHJAHANABAD

*Stephen P. Blake*

*This comparison of the building activities of elite women in Shahjahanabad and Isfahan suggests that the seclusion and protection of women were more crucial to male honor and more deeply entrenched in Iran than in India.*

In this paper I compare the building activities of women in Shahjahanabad and Isfahan. Capitals of the Mughal and Şafavid Empires, these two cities topped the urban hierarchies in India and Iran during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This comparison offers a new look at the lives of elite women in these two early modern Islamic states. While the institution of *parda* [seclusion of women] has been a mark of Islamic societies across the world and through the ages, most of the scholarly work has concentrated on the women of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Very little attention has been directed to the activities and roles of women in medieval and early modern Islam.<sup>1</sup>

Comparison is the key feature of my analysis. Looked at alone, the tables below on building activities would have been difficult to interpret. Without comparison, isolating what was significant about the status and activities of women in these two societies would have been impossible. With comparison, however, a backdrop is established. Against this, it is possible to single out what was characteristic and distinctive about the lives of elite women in India and Iran and what was commonplace.

Seclusion and the protection of women seem to have been more crucial to considerations of male honor and more deeply entrenched in Iran than in India. Women in Isfahan were more confined and

less able to act in the public sphere than in Shahjahanabad. While this general conclusion is significant, my analysis provides a detailed picture of the impact of *parda* on the architecture of the two capitals. The kind, size, and location of the buildings the women constructed reveals a great deal about their freedom, the resources they controlled, and their impact on the larger world. On the other hand, the relationships of these women in the private realm—wife, daughter, sister, mother, or grandmother—determined to a large extent the number, size, and importance of the structures they were able to erect.

#### SHAHJAHANABAD AND THE MUGHAL EMPIRE (1526–1739)

Although Muḥammad Zahīr al-Dīn Bābur (932–37/1526–30), a Čaghatāy Turk from Ferghāna in Central Asia, founded the Mughal Empire, Akbar (961–1014/1556–1605), Bābur's grandson, was the principal architect of the greatest Muslim state in the subcontinent. The Mughal state was a patrimonial-bureaucratic empire, a state in which the imperial household was the central institution. Under Akbar and the later Mughals, the imperial household grew to an enormous size. Under Shāhjahān (1037–68/1628–58), the builder of Shahjahanabad, it probably contained about 57,000 persons: 10,000 cavalrymen, 30,000 servants and dependants, 10,000 artillerymen and musketeers, and 7,000 family members, servants, clerks, and officials. The seventy or so great *amīrs* at the top of the Mughal system maintained similar households of reduced size.

The primary goal of the patrimonial-bureaucratic emperor in this state was to assimilate state to household. He wanted to administer, control, and finance the entire realm as if it were part of his own private domain. In trying to achieve these goals the emperors followed two strategies. They organized the military and administrative men of the state by means of a ranked system of rewards and responsibilities called the *manṣabdārī* [officeholder] system. They also developed an elaborate system of tax assessment and collection. Over time, the Mughals came to dominate the Indian subcontinent. One of the largest and richest states of premodern Eurasia, the Mughal Empire probably contained about 150 million persons in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Shahjahanabad, the city that the emperor Shāhjahān founded in 1639, replaced the earlier Mughal capital of Agra, or Akbarābād. Set

in the Delhi triangle, an area that included the remains of eight previous capitals, the new capital was dominated by the imperial palace-fortress and the Jamī' Masjid. After Shāhjahān inaugurated the new capital in 1648 and moved his household into the palace fortress, work began on the two central bazaars, Chandnī Chawk and Faiz Bāzār, and on the mosques, mansions, and gardens (see Map 1). In 1650, when the emperor was in residence, the city probably had a population of about 400,000.<sup>3</sup>

#### ISFAHAN AND THE ŠAFAVID EMPIRE (1501–1722)

The Šafavids first appeared in northwestern Iran in the fourteenth century and for the next 150 years led an uneventful existence as leaders of the small *šūfī* sect that bore their name.<sup>4</sup> From the mid-fifteenth century onward, however, the sect became intensely messianic and Shī'ite until, attracting more followers, it cast off its provincial moorings and set sail for the centers of population and power in the southeast. In 1501 Shāh Ismā'īl entered Tabrīz at the head of a large army, proclaimed Šafavid rule, and declared Shī'ism the state religion. By 1510 the entire country had come under the sway of the new dynasty.

At the apex of the Šafavid state was the shāh, whose rule, like that of the other patrimonial bureaucratic emperors, was both personal and absolute. The legitimacy of the Šafavid ruler had three aspects: (1) the old Iranian tradition of the divine right of kings; (2) the claim of the Šafavid shāhs to be representatives of the *Mahdī* [the hidden leader of all Shī'ites]; and (3) the shāh's position as *Šafavīyya murshīd-i kāmīl* [perfect leader] of the *šūfī* order. The Iranians thought that God appointed the shāh and that he was the shadow of God on earth. All Šafavid officials were considered slaves of the shāh, their lives and property at his disposal.

Shāh 'Abbās (996–1038/1588–1629), the greatest of the Šafavid rulers, was the epitome of the patrimonial-bureaucratic ruler. He completely reorganized the governmental apparatus and founded Isfahan. The power of the throne had declined drastically in the twelve years before his reign, and 'Abbās had come to power with the help of the Turkish tribal chieftains. To become independent of these cavalrymen and to establish himself, 'Abbās recruited a force of military slaves loyal to him alone. Circassians, Georgians, and Armenians, these household troops were quite similar in function



and organization to the Janissaries of the Ottoman sultan. In time, this force grew into a standing household army of about 40,000: 10–15,000 cavalrymen with muskets; 12,000 musketeers who eventually became cavalry; 12,000 artillerymen; and 3,000 bodyguards. In Iran, as in Mughal India, the function of these troops was to cow the nobles and to increase the personal strength and control of the sultan. To prevent the great men from establishing independent footholds in the countryside, ‘Abbās, like Akbar and the other Mughal emperors, transferred them from their native areas to other parts of the empire.

Under the Šafavids the nobles maintained large retinues of soldiers, artisans, merchants, and artists and organized them into complex households like that of the *shāh*. The nobility included both Turkish and Persian officials. Under ‘Abbās, however, the slaves of the *shāh*’s household began to enter the administration and, by the end of his reign, these men held about 20 percent of the high positions in government. During the seventeenth century, the population of Šafavid Iran was probably about eight to ten million persons.<sup>5</sup>

Although *Shāh* ‘Abbās moved his capital from Qazvīn to Isfahan in 1590, it was not until 1602 that he laid out the *Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān*, the great central square around which he organized his new capital (see Map 2). As the urban core, this square held the architectural symbols of the central political, economic, and religious institutions of the Šafavid state. The ‘Alī Qāpū [High Gate], completed between 1617 and 1624 on the western side of the square, was the ceremonial gateway to ‘Abbās’s palace and an audience hall for imperial assemblies. In 1602 the imperial builders laid out the *Qaišarīya Bāzār* [imperial market], which connected ‘Abbās’s new square to the *Maydān-i Hārūn Vilāyat*, the old center of the city; its monumental gateway was finished in 1617–18. The *Shaykh* Luṭf Allāh mosque, begun in 1602 and completed in 1618–19, stood opposite the ‘Alī Qāpū on the eastern side of the square. The *Masjid-i Shāh*, the congregational mosque ‘Abbās built for his new city, was the last major monument on the new *maydān*. Begun in 1611, the majestic gateway was finished in 1616 and the mosque itself was virtually complete by 1630–31. The other major element in the new city was the *Chahār Bāgh* avenue, the long plaisance lined with garden mansions that connected the imperial palace and the imperial garden retreat of *Hazār Jarīb*. By 1650, the population of the city when the emperor was in residence was about 500,000.<sup>6</sup>

Tables 1 and 2 present the information on women builders in Mughal Shahjahanabad and Şafavid Isfahan. Columns one and two identify the builder, and columns three, four, and five give the type, date, and location of the structure. The remainder of this essay consists of an analysis and comparison of the data in these tables.

TABLE I: WOMEN BUILDERS IN MUGHAL SHAHJAHANABAD

NAME	IDENTIFICATION	BUILDING	DATE	LOCATION
Jahanara Begum	daughter of Shahjahan	Mansion	1648	Map 1, no. 1
Jahanara Begum	daughter of Shahjahan	Chandni Chawk	1650	Map 1, no. 2
Jahanara Begum	daughter of Shahjahan	Sahiba Abad Garden	1650	Map 1, no. 3
Jahanara Begum	daughter of Shahjahan	Caravanserai	1650	Map 1, no. 4
Jahanara Begum	daughter of Shahjahan	Bathhouse	1650	Map 1, no. 5
Raushan Ara Begum	daughter of Shahjahan	Garden Tomb, Raushan Ara Bagh	1650	Map 1, no. 6
Fathpuri Begum	wife of Shahjahan	Fathpuri Mosque	1650	Map 1, no. 7
Fathpuri Begum	wife of Shahjahan	Caravanaserai	1650	Map 1, no. 8
Akbarabadi Begum	wife of Shahjahan	Akbarabadi Mosque	1650	Map 1, no. 9
Akbarabadi Begum	wife of Shahjahan	Caravanaserai	1650	Map 1, no. 10
Akbarabadi Begum	wife of Shahjahan	Bathhouse	1650	Map 1, no. 11
Akbarabadi Begum	wife of Shahjahan	Faiz Bazaar	1650	Map 1, no. 12
Sirhindi Begum	wife of Shahjahan	Sirhindi Mosque	1650	Map 1, no. 13
Sirhindi Begum	wife of Shahjahan	Garden Tomb, Sabzimandi	1650	Map 1, no. 14
Aurangabadi Begum	wife of Aurangzeb	Aurangabadi Mosque	1703	Map 1, no. 15
Zinat al-Nisa Begum	daughter of Aurangzeb	Zinat al-Masajid	1707	Map 1, no. 16
Zinat al-Nisa Begum	daughter of Aurangzeb	Garden Tomb, Tis Hazari Bagh	late 17th	Map 1, no. 17
Fakr al-Nisa Begum	wife of Shuja'at Khan	Fakr al-Masajid	1728	Map 1, no. 18
Nur Bai	singer	Mansion	1730's	Unknown

TABLE 2: WOMEN BUILDERS IN SAFAVID ISFAHAN

NAME	IDENTIFICATION	BUILDING	DATE	LOCATION
Dilaram Khanum	grandmother of Abbas II	Caravanserai Jadda	1642-45	Map 2, no. 1
Dilaram Khanum	grandmother of Abbas II	Caravanserai Nim Avar	1640's	Map 2, no. 2
Dilaram Khanum	grandmother of Abbas II	Madrasa of Small Grandmother	1645-46	Map 2, no. 3
Dilaram Khanum	grandmother of Abbas II	Madrasa of Large Grandmother	1647-48	Map 2, no. 4
Sahib Sultan Begum	daughter of Hakim Nizam al-Din Muhammad	Ilchi Mosque	1678-79	Map 2, no. 5
Maryam Begum	daughter of Shah Safi	Mansion	early 18th	Map 2, no. 6
Maryam Begum	daughter of Shah Safi	Madrasa	1703-04	Map 2, no. 7
Not given	mother of Abbas II	Masjid-i Jami' of 'Abbasabad	mid 17th	Map 2, no. 8
Shahr Banu	sister of Shah Sultan Husain	Madrasa of the Princes	1694-1722	Map 2, no. 9
Shahr Banu	sister of Shah Sultan Husain	Bathhouse of the Princes	1694-1722	Map 2, no. 10
Zinat Begum	wife of Hakim al-Mulk Ardistani	Madrasa Nim Avar	1705-06	Map 2, no. 11
Anonymous	courtesan	Mansion	early 17th	Map 2, no. 12
Issat Nisa Khanum	wife of Mirza Muhammad Mahdi	Madrasa Mirza Husin	1687-88	Map 2, no. 13

## WOMEN

Table 3 divides the women according to identity. As one might expect from the nature of the sources and the size and expense of the buildings, most of the women were elite persons. In Shahjahanabad, seven of the nine women were members of the imperial family, one was the wife of a rich and powerful great *amir*, and only one, a famous singer, was from the lower reaches of the socio-economic order. In Isfahan, four out of the eight women were members of the imperial household, two were wives of respected physicians, one was the wife of a rich merchant, and one was a famous courtesan.

In each capital a cultured courtesan constructed a mansion that was popular among the urban nobility. In Isfahan, the "mansion of the twelve tumans," so-called because of the price charged by the

TABLE 3: IDENTITY OF WOMEN BUILDERS IN SHAHJAHANABAD AND ISFAHAN

CITY	TOTAL	DAUGHTER	MOTHER	GRANDMOTHER	SISTER	WIFE	UNKNOWN
Isfahan:	8	2	1	1	1	2	1
nonimperial:	4	1				2	1
imperial:	4	1	1	1	1		
Shahjahanabad:	9	3				5	1
nonimperial:	2					1	1
imperial:	7	3				4	

madam for a client's first visit, contained one large chamber, two halls, and three pavilions. Her builders decorated the walls and ceiling in gold and silver. She sheathed the front door in steel because several young nobles had tried to set it afire when denied admission. Having made her fortune the madam retired and, with several of her girls, made the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>7</sup>

The mansion of Nūr Bā'ī, a popular singer in early eighteenth-century Shahjahanabad, attracted a great throng. Outside her house, elephants carrying great men clogged the lanes. Inside, her assemblies, fueled by wine, became loud and raucous. To gain entrance, the great man had to deposit a large sum at the door. Besides entertaining the *amīrs*, Nūr Bā'ī also arranged special sessions for the high-ranking women of the Mughal court.<sup>8</sup>

In Shahjahanabad, the only two non-imperial women builders were Nūr Bā'ī, the singer, and Fakhr al-Nisā' Begam or Fakhr al-Jahān, wife of Shujā'at Khān, a high-ranking *amīr* under Awrangzīb. In Isfahan, on the other hand, four women builders were from non-imperial families. Besides the anonymous courtesan, there was Şāhib Sulţān Begam, daughter of the physician and ambassador Ḥakīm Niţām al-Dīn Muḥammad, Zinat Begam, wife of the physician Ḥakīm al-Mulk Ardistānī, and 'Izzat al-Nisā' Khānūm, daughter of the merchant Mīrzā Khān Tājir of Qum and wife of Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī. The presence of three elite women of non-imperial origin reflected the social homogeneity and relative poverty of Şafavid Isfahan. In Mughal Shahjahanabad, Hindus—merchants,

artisans, physicians, painters, and administrators—formed a large part of the non-ruling urban classes. These men constructed temples, *ghāts* [platforms for burning the dead], and educational institutions. In addition, Mughal India was a much richer state than Şafavid Isfahan, and the members of the imperial family had much more money at their disposal. In Şafavid Isfahan, on the other hand, the population was heavily Muslim and the imperial family poorer. Thus, non-imperial elite women, wives and daughters of merchants and physicians, were more able to stamp their mark on the urban landscape.

In Isfahan, four of the eight women belonged to the imperial family. Each was related to the *shāh* in a different way: daughter, mother, grandmother, or sister. Although most of the women in Shahjahanabad (seven of nine) were members of the imperial family, their relationships were less varied: three daughters and four wives. Why the differences? What did they reflect about social structure and the institution of *parda* in the two cities?

Four of the seven imperial women in Shahjahanabad were wives; in Isfahan, no imperial wives at all were represented. This reflects, I think, the strength of *parda* in Şafavid Iran.

In the Islamic world overall, and in Iran in particular, the house was a sacred area [harem]. One *hadīth*, collected by Ibn Ḥanbal, read:

God's Messenger said, 'The house (*dār*) is a sacred area. If anyone comes into your harem (without your permission), kill him.'<sup>9</sup>

The sacred character of the house derived from the sanctity of its female occupants. Arabic-speaking Muslims used the term 'harem' to denote both a man's wife and the forbidden character of his domestic space. Thus, besides suggesting that visitors seek permission before entering a house, Muḥammad also cautioned male visitors against any house where they would be alone with marriageable women. In Arabic-speaking Islamic countries the saying "Every house has its own sacrality..." referred primarily to the presence of women. Wives, along with daughters, were the repositories of the house's sacred character.<sup>10</sup>

According to the French merchant Jean Chardin, the seclusion of women was more important to male honor in Iran than in the other Islamic countries of the Middle East. Poets and courtiers

praised men of 70 and 80 for the size of their harems: a man was said to travel with so many "camel-loads of women."<sup>11</sup> The *shāh* never allowed the women of the imperial household to leave for visits or pilgrimages<sup>12</sup> and, although many mosques in Şafavid Iran contained minarets, they were not used as intended.<sup>13</sup> Chardin wrote:

Nevertheless, as they are jealous of women in Persia....they do not let anyone who calls the prayer climb high because they will see the women in their mansions that are always open to the side or in their courts and their gardens. Thus, the minarets serve only as ornaments and they do not make any more in this day. They put in place of minarets, on the platforms of the mosque, a small room open on all sides, from which they give the public call.<sup>14</sup>

In Mughal India, on the other hand, the institution of *parda* was not so deeply entrenched. The Mughals ruled a largely Hindu population, and the emperors took Hindu wives and concubines. In addition, the culture of the Mughal court was a syncretic blend of Hindu and Muslim styles and traditions. Although husbands and fathers ordinarily secluded their wives and daughters in Mughal India, they did not link their own sense of honor so strongly to the institution of *parda*. Thus, imperial wives in Mughal India played a more public role than in Şafavid Iran.

Besides wives, imperial daughters were also important builders in Mughal Shahjahanabad. In Shahjahanabad, three of the seven imperial women were daughters whereas in Isfahan only one of four was. Beyond the weaker hold of *parda*, the other reason for the expanded public role of imperial daughters in Mughal India was that many of these women remained unmarried.

In Şafavid Iran, imperial daughters were routinely married to the great men of the realm, cementing the ties between the imperial and great *amīrī* households. Establishing such bonds helped to ensure the loyalty of potentially competitive centers of power.<sup>15</sup> In Mughal India, on the other hand, it was not uncommon for the daughters of the principal imperial wives to remain unmarried. Exactly why this was so is unclear. Perhaps it was a way of enhancing the magnificence and power of the emperor, underlining his remoteness and inaccessibility. Whatever the reasons, it aroused comment in a society where virtually everyone married. For Jahānārā Begam, the strong affection between father and daughter and the unwillingness

of the daughter to marry gave birth to the rumor of an incestuous relationship between the two.<sup>16</sup>

Unmarried, imperial daughters in Mughal India were often quite active in the public arena. In fact, the greatest single builder among the women of Shahjahanabad was Jahānārā Begam, the eldest child of the emperor Shāhjahān. A remarkable woman, responsible for five of the eighteen buildings in Table 1, she played a central role in the affairs of the imperial household under her father.

The emperor Shāhjahān ascended the throne in 1628 but his favorite wife, Mumtāz Maḥall or Tāj Maḥall, the woman for whom he built the great tomb, died in 1631. On the death of her mother, Jahānārā Begam became the chief power in the harem. Although the emperor gave her the titles 'Şāhibat al-Zamānī' [Mistress of the Age] and 'Pādshāh Begam' [Lady Emperor], the court usually addressed her as Begam Şāhib.<sup>17</sup>

Jahānārā was well educated. She studied the Qur'ān and, like her brother Dārā Shukōh, developed a taste for mysticism. In 1671, she wrote a biography of the Muslim saint Mu'īn al-Dīn Čishtī. She composed verses in Persian, wrote her own epitaph, and rewarded poets and men of letters. Mīr Muḥammad 'Alī Mahīr, a poet of seventeenth-century Shahjahanabad, praised her generosity and patronage of literature in a *mathnawī* [a long poem].<sup>18</sup>

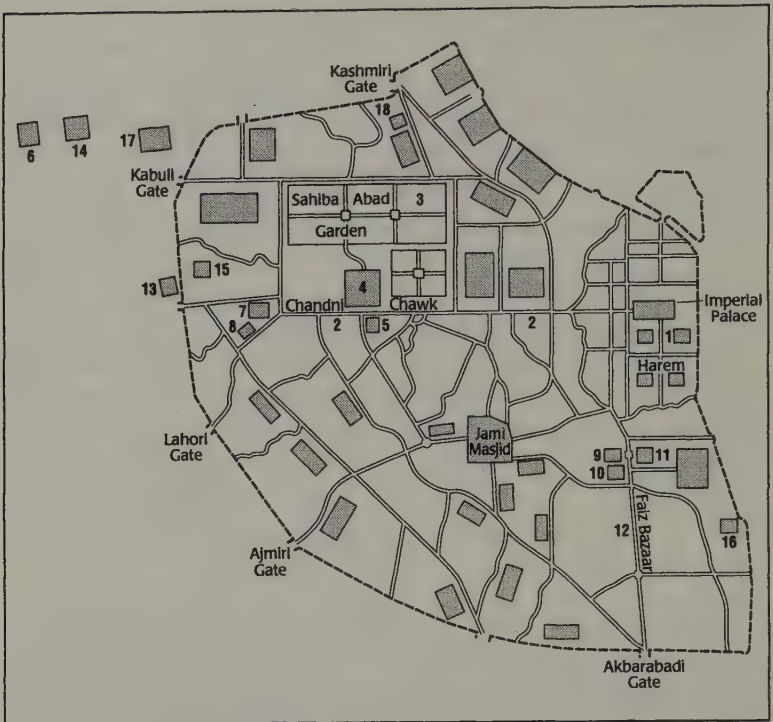
With her mother gone, Jahānārā arranged the marriages of her brothers. She collected the presents and oversaw the arrangements for her favorite brother, Dārā Shukōh, and planned the nuptials of Awrangzīb and Shujā'.<sup>19</sup>

After her father fell ill in 1658, Jahānārā supported her brother Dārā Shukōh in the 'War of Succession' that followed. When Awrangzīb defeated Dārā, the new emperor imprisoned Shāhjahān in the fortress of Agra. Jahānārā joined her father in prison and comforted him from 1658 until his death in 1666.<sup>20</sup> Although she had supported his rival in the 'War of Succession,' Awrangzīb (1068–1118/1658–1707) always treated Jahānārā with the greatest respect. In 1666, after the death of Shāhjahān and her emergence from the Agra fort, Awrangzīb rewarded his sister with a large cash gift. On her return to Shahjahanabad, Awrangzīb lodged her in the mansion of 'Alī Mardān Khān, one of the finest in the city. In 1669, he ordered Dānīshmand Khān, an eminent and highly cultured *amīr*, to look after her.<sup>21</sup>

TABLE 4: BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED BY WOMEN		
BUILDING	SHAHJAHANABAD	ISFAHAN
Mansion:	2	2
Madrasa:		6
Caravanaserai:	3	2
Mosque:	6	2
Bathhouse:	2	1
Bazaar:	2	
Garden:	4	
Total:	19	13

What do we find when we look at the buildings themselves? First, the women of Shahjahanabad were more productive. The nine Indian women constructed nineteen buildings whereas the eight Iranian women constructed thirteen. Second, as can be seen from Table 4, the mix of buildings in the two cities was quite different. In Isfahan, the predominant building was the *madrasa* [college], comprising six of the thirteen buildings. In Shahjahanabad, on the other hand, the nineteen structures included six mosques, four gardens, and three caravanserais—no single building type predominated. Third, in Isfahan a substantial majority of the buildings (62 percent) served a religious function. Of the thirteen buildings, two were mosques and six were *madrasas*. In Shahjahanabad, on the other hand, the secular building predominated: only six of nineteen (mosques all, comprising 32 percent) were religious structures. Finally, women clearly made a much more substantial contribution to the cityscape in Shahjahanabad than in Isfahan. In Shahjahanabad, women built the two central bazaars and six of the eight large congregational mosques. In Isfahan, on the other hand, the contribution of women to the cityscape was minor. Without the participation of these women, the Iranian capital would have remained the same. In Shahjahanabad, on the other hand, imperial

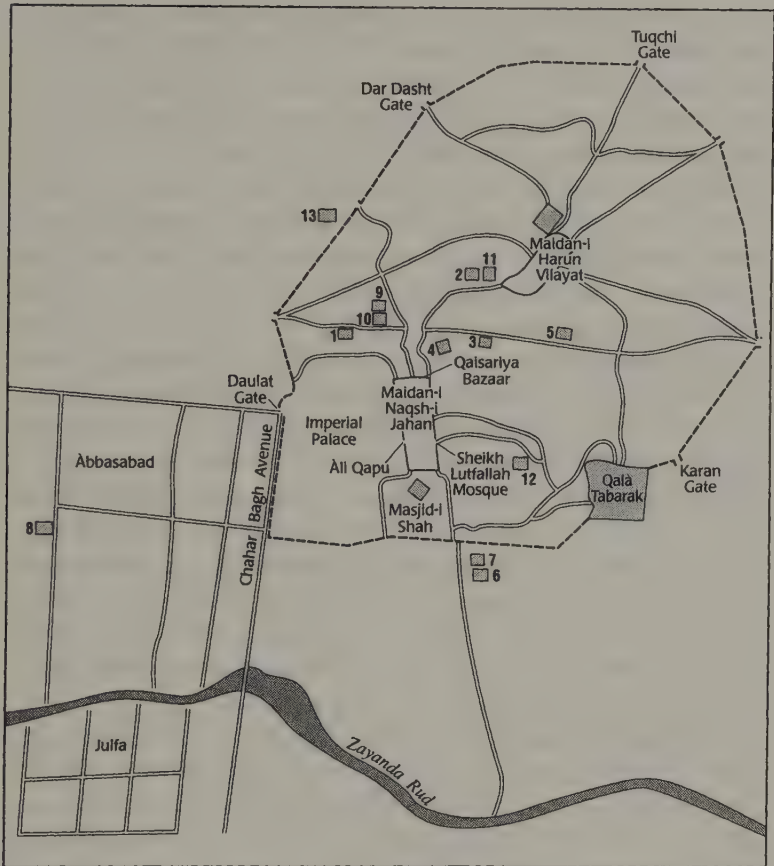




Map 1: Shahjahanabad, 1739

wives and daughters added crucial elements to the design and appearance of the new capital.

Before looking at the reasons for these differences, it is time to look more closely at the individual structures. In Isfahan the pre-eminent woman builder was Dilārām *Khānūm*, the grandmother of *Shāh* ‘Abbās II (1052–77/1642–66). Although she was also the mother of *Shāh* Ṣafī (1038–52/1629–42), the father of ‘Abbās II, the inscriptions and reports stress her relationship to ‘Abbās II because she erected her buildings during his reign. The fact that the leading woman-builder in Isfahan was a grandmother underscores the strength of the institution of *parda*. Unlike daughters, sisters, or wives, women whose purity had a major impact on the honor of the *shāh* or great *amīr*, grandmothers were at much less risk sexually.



Map 2: Isfahan, 1722

They needed less protection and thus were allowed more freedom in the public sphere.

Dilārām Khānūm underwrote the construction of four buildings—two caravanserais and two *madrasas*. Like the other women in Iran and India, she entrusted the details of design and construction to the men of her household establishment.<sup>22</sup> Her largest and most impressive project was the Caravanserai-i Jadda (map 2, no. 1). Constructed during the early years of Shāh ‘Abbās II’s reign and part of his plan to displace some commercial activity from the Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān to a new, subsidiary *maydān* [the Maydān-i Nau or New Maydān],<sup>23</sup>

this caravanserai housed rich Indian cloth merchants. They sold the highly valued cloth of India: chintz, white cloth, and turban cloth with gold and silver thread. They also offered indigo, sugar candy, eye medicine, fruit from the myrobalan tree, ginger, and tobacco (from both India and Shīrāz).<sup>24</sup>

The two *madrasas* were more modest (map 2, numbers 3 and 4). Like the other builders in Ṣafavid Iran, Dilārām Khānūm gave these colleges *waqfs* [dedications of income]. In Mughal India, on the other hand, *waqf* income supported none of the six mosques constructed by women.

The other seven women-builders in Ṣafavid Isfahan also employed household architects and engineers and most provided their mosques or *madrasas* with *waqfs*. The story of Zīnat Begam, wife of the physician Ḥakīm al-Mulk Ardistānī, is of interest because of its connection to the women-builders of Shahjahanabad. Zīnat Begam built a *madrasa* (map 2, no. 11) and, along with her husband, dedicated properties in and around Ardistan for its maintenance. According to local tradition, Ḥakīm al-Mulk cured the sister of the Mughal emperor Awrangzīb and was handsomely rewarded.<sup>25</sup> Although the tradition does not name her, the sister was probably Raūshanārā, Awrangzīb's favorite.

A look at the types of buildings constructed by the Mughal women in Shahjahanabad reveals striking differences from Isfahan. In Mughal India, the greatest woman builder was Jahānārā Begam. She was responsible for five out of the nineteen buildings. She was the major builder in the harem area of the imperial palace fortress, constructing a beautiful mansion (map 1, no. 1) with a carved marble screen facing the river. Her builders painted the walls and ceilings and scattered small pieces of sparkling glass here and there.<sup>26</sup> This mansion, along with the other gardens and apartments in the harem, cost Jahānārā RS 700,000.<sup>27</sup>

Jahānārā Begam also laid out the famous central bazaar of Mughal Shahjahanabad, Chandnī Chawk (map 1, no. 2). Built in 1650, soon after the completion of the palace fortress and the city walls, this street was 40 yards wide, 1,520 yards long, and contained 1,560 shops and porticos. The Paradise canal flowed down its middle, watering a row of trees that provided shade and a place to rest.<sup>28</sup> The shops along the sides of the bazaar occupied small rooms under arcades. Thin partitions separated the shops, and at the back of each

establishment a door led to a small warehouse where the merchants stored their surplus goods. Above the warehouse lived the owner, his family, and servants. Merchants from other provinces of the empire and from other countries brought their goods to this central bazaar. A contemporary account mentions traders from Turkey, Zanzibar, Syria, Yemen, Arabia, Iraq, Khurasan, China, and Tibet besides Europeans from England and Holland. These men brought rubies from Badakhshan, pearls from Oman, and fresh fruits from Kashmir and Central Asia. They supplied weapons, fine cloth, perfumes, elephants, horses, camels, birds, water pipes, and delicate sweets. The East India Company merchants sold tapestries, wool, and broadcloth. Boys and girls danced in front of the shops. Storytellers, sitting on carpets, told tales of fasting and hardship during Ramaḍān and related the sad story of Ḥusayn during Muḥarram. Physicians sold remedies for coughs, syphilis, gonorrhoea, and impotence. The wine shops were so enticing that they tempted one hundred-year-old ascetics. At the coffeehouses, *amīrs* gathered to listen to poetry, engage in light conversation, and watch the passing scene.<sup>29</sup>

Toward the western end of Chandnī Chawk, Jahānārā Begam erected three other structures. In the middle of the long street of shops she laid out a *čawk* [chawk, marketplace] with sides one hundred yards long. In the middle of the octagon lay a large pool. To the north the builders of her household establishment built a caravanserai (map 1, no. 4). Bernier considered this caravanserai the most imposing structure in the city after the Jami' Masjid [Friday Mosque]. Square and two-storied, it had towers at each corner and contained 90 rooms, each beautifully painted and appointed. In the middle of the courtyard was a garden filled with water courses, pools, trees, and flowers. A mosque stood in one corner. Jahānārā allowed only the richest and most eminent Persian and Uzbek merchants to stay there.<sup>30</sup>

She wrote:

I will build a serai, large and fine like no other in Hindustan. The wanderer who enters its courts will be restored in body and soul and my name will never be forgotten.<sup>31</sup>

To the south, Jahānārā built one of the largest public baths in the city (map 1, no. 5). It was one hundred and eighty feet long and sixty feet wide, with many rooms and porticos.<sup>32</sup>

The central feature, however, of this complex was the *Şāḥiba Ābād* garden (map 1, no. 3), the largest garden in the city. *Şāḥiba Ābād* measured three thousand feet by seven hundred and enclosed a rectangular area of about fifty acres. The Paradise canal entered the city by the *Kābul Gate* and divided into two branches soon after. One branch flowed down the middle of *Chandnī Chawk*, feeding the canals that provided water to the mansions and shops of the city. The other branch entered *Şāḥiba Ābād* at its western end and flowed through the garden on its way to the palace-fortress. *Jahānārā's* gardeners filled the garden with beautiful flowers and fruit trees; at the four corners stood towers. The spray of the surrounding fountains shaded summer houses set in the middle of small ponds. While *Jahānārā* intended the other two buildings of the complex, the caravanserai and the bathhouse, to benefit the public at large, the *Şāḥiba Ābād* garden was a private, intimate space in the middle of the city—a cool, green area reserved for the women and children of the imperial household.

The importance of women in the construction of *Shahjahanabad* is most evident when the congregational mosques are considered. Unlike the simple mosque, a small structure without a pulpit used by the people of the neighborhood, the *masjid-i jami'* [congregational mosque] had a pulpit and a wide courtyard for the larger crowd that gathered on Fridays and holidays. In *Shahjahanabad*, nine congregational mosques were constructed. The pre-eminent religious structure in the city was the *Jami' Masjid*, the congregational mosque built by *Şāḥjahān*. Of the remaining eight congregational mosques, however, each established for the inhabitants of different sections of the city, women built six.

The most important builder, after *Jahānārā Begam*, was *Akbarābādī Begam*, a wife of *Şāḥjahān*. She constructed the other central bazaar of the city, *Faiḻ Bāzār* ('Bazaar of Plenty,' map 1, no. 12). This street stretched one thousand and fifty yards from the palace fortress to the city wall. It was 30 yards wide, contained 888 shops, and had a branch of the Paradise canal running down its middle. At the head of the bazaar, just south of the palace gate, *Akbarābādī Begam* laid out a rectangle 160 yards long and sixty yards wide. To the west she built the *Akbarābādī mosque* (map 1, no. 9), a magnificent structure of black, red, and creamy white called '*Uşrat Panāhī* [Great Protection] in the contemporary sources. Near

the mosque she built a caravanserai (map 1, no. 10) for scholars and on the opposite side of the square a bathhouse (Map 1, no. 11).<sup>33</sup>

Two building types, the bazaar and the garden, were constructed by women in Mughal Shahjahanabad but not in Şafavid Isfahan. The two central bazaars, constructed by a daughter and a wife of Shāhjahān, were major projects and required substantial investments. Women of the imperial household—three daughters and one wife—constructed four gardens in and around the city. Besides Şāhība Ābād, the largest of the four and the only one within the city walls, Raushanārā Begam, the younger sister of Jahānārā, constructed in Sabzīmāndī in 1650 the garden tomb (Raushanārā Garden, map 1, no. 6) in which she was buried.<sup>34</sup> Sirhindī Begam, a wife of Shāhjahān, also built a garden tomb in Sabzīmāndī (map 1, no. 14).<sup>35</sup> Later, Zīnat al-Nisāʾ Begam (d. 1706), a daughter of Awrangzīb, laid out a smaller garden tomb (map 1, no. 17) in the Tīs Ḥazārī garden.<sup>36</sup> Malka Zamānī, a wife of Muḥammad Shāh (1131–61/1719–48), was also buried there.<sup>37</sup>

What accounted for the differences in the buildings constructed by the women of the two cities? Why did the Mughal women erect more buildings? Why were the individual structures more elaborate and costly in Shahjahanabad? The most important reason was the difference in wealth. The women of Mughal India had much greater incomes and could build more complex structures. Imperial daughters and wives in Mughal India, like the officeholders [*manṣabdārs*] of the Mughal state, received regular stipends. These salaries were ordinarily in two parts: (1) a cash allowance from the imperial household treasury; and (2) the assignment of a revenue source, land taxes or commercial taxes. After the death of her mother in 1631, the emperor raised Jahānārā Begam's allowance from RS 600,000 to RS 1,000,000. In addition, he regularly gave lavish gifts to her and the other harem ladies. On his accession to the throne in 1628, Shāhjahān gave Mumtāz Maḥall 200,000 gold coins and RS 400,000 and Jahānārā Begam 100,000 gold coins and RS 400,000. In 1650, Shāhjahān added the revenues from the *pargana* (subdivision) of Pānīpat and from the city of Surat, the principal port in Mughal India for overseas trade, to Jahānārā's stipend. He probably increased her income at this time because of her building activities in Shahjahanabad. In 1666, after Shāhjahān's death and her return to Shahjahanabad, Awrangzīb raised Jahānārā's allowance to RS 1,700,000.<sup>38</sup>

In comparing the construction activities of women in Ṣafavid Isfahan and Mughal Shahjahanabad, two other points stand out: the dates of the buildings and their locations. In Isfahan these buildings spanned a 70-year period from the 1640s to the 1710s. Since Shāh 'Abbās founded the city in 1590 and laid out the Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān in 1602, the women of Ṣafavid Iran built their buildings well after the construction of the central and defining monuments of 'Abbās's new capital. In Shahjahanabad, on the other hand, the elite women constructed their buildings during the city's formative years. The emperor and the great men established the basic outline of the new capital—the walls, palace-fortress, and mansions—between 1639 and 1648, and Shāhjahān moved into the palace-fortress in 1648. Fourteen of the nineteen buildings in Table One were dated 1650 or before. Built by a daughter and two wives of Shāhjahān, these were crucial components of the new Mughal capital.

As for the locations of the buildings, none of the thirteen structures in Isfahan stood around the Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān, the central square of the city, or on the Chahār Bāgh avenue, the beautiful plaisance that linked the imperial palace and the Hazār Jarīb Garden. In Shahjahanabad, on the other hand, the buildings erected by the women of Shāhjahān's household in the early days of the city occupied central and significant positions. The two bazaars, centers of commerce, split the city and the Ṣāḥiba Ābād garden, the Fathpūrī mosque, the Akbarābādī mosque, and their accompanying caravanserais and bathhouses, dominated the cityscape.

#### CONCLUSION

This comparison of the building activities of women in Shahjahanabad and Isfahan opens a window onto the lives and activities of women in early modern India and Iran. Although most of the women in both cities were members of imperial or great *amīrī* families, a courtesan in each capital built a mansion, a place of pleasure and diversion for the urban nobility. In Shahjahanabad, most elite women (seven out of eight) were members of the imperial household; in Isfahan, on the other hand, the seven elite women came almost equally from imperial (four) and noble (three) families. This difference reflected, for the most part, differences in wealth. The Mughal emperors, ruling one of the largest and wealthiest states

of early modern Eurasia, had enormous resources at their disposal. Their wives and daughters enjoyed generous annual stipends, supported large household establishments, and were well able to finance major construction projects. The Şafavid *shāhs*, on the other hand, controlling a smaller and poorer state, had fewer resources at their disposal. While the grandmother of *Shāh* 'Abbās II had an annual stipend and a household establishment, we do not have figures for her yearly income. No information at all exists for the financial resources of the other three imperial women. The relative poverty of the Şafavid imperial family allowed non-imperial elite women an opportunity. In Isfahan, the differences between the financial resources of the great *amīrī* and imperial women were less pronounced, and the women of noble families were better able to contribute to the urban landscape.

The seven imperial women builders in Shahjahanabad included four wives and three daughters. In Isfahan, on the other hand, the four imperial women included a daughter, mother, grandmother, and sister. The smaller number of imperial women and their relationships within the imperial household reflected the greater strength of *parda* in Şafavid Iran. The honor of the Şafavid *shāh* depended in part on the control he maintained over his wives and daughters. Thus no wives only one daughter appeared among the imperial women-builders of Şafavid Iran. While the emperors maintained harems for their wives, daughters, mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and concubines in Mughal India, the contribution of female seclusion to the male sense of honor was not so great. In Mughal Shahjahanabad, the two greatest women-builders were a wife and an unmarried daughter of the emperor *Shāhjahān*.

Having analyzed their identities, what do we learn from a comparison of the buildings they constructed? The women of Shahjahanabad were more productive. The nine women of the Mughal capital built nineteen buildings whereas the eight women of Isfahan built thirteen. In Isfahan, moreover, most of the buildings (eight out of thirteen) served a religious function; in Shahjahanabad, on the other hand, the buildings were primarily secular, only six out of nineteen fulfilled religious requirements. A look at the date, location, and size of the individual structures reveals that the women of Mughal India had a much greater impact. In Shahjahanabad, they constructed fourteen of their nineteen buildings in the early



days of the city. These buildings—two central bazaars, six of the eight congregational mosques, three large caravanserais, two large bathhouses, and the Şāḥiba Ābād garden—occupied central locations in the new city. The bazaars, in particular, were substantial projects. Chandnī Chawk, constructed by Jahānārā Begam, contained 1,560 shops, and Faiẓ Bāzār, constructed by Akbarābādī Begam, contained 888 shops. In Isfahan, on the other hand, the women's buildings dated from mid- to late-seventeenth century, well after the establishment of the central urban core around the Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān. These structures were modest and were to be found in the more peripheral areas of the city. None faced the central *maydān* or the Chahār Bāgh avenue.

## NOTES

1. One recent example is Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
2. For a general discussion, see John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire, The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1993) vol. 1, p. 5. For population see p. 190.
3. Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639–1739* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 66–67.
4. For an overview of the state, see Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6: *The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
5. V. Minorsky, ed. and trans., *Tadhkirat al-Muluk* (London: Luzac and Co., 1943), p. 186.
6. Stephen P. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* [forthcoming], chapter 2.
7. Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, en Perse...*, ed. L. Langles, 10 vols. (Paris: Le Normant, 1811), vol. 7, pp. 409–13.
8. Nawāb Dargāh Qūli Khān Sālār Jang, "Risālah Salar Jang," Persian Manuscript Collection, Add. 26, 237, British Library, London, fol. 123a–24.
9. Jean Eduardo Campo, *The Other Side of Paradise: Explorations into the Religious Meanings of Domestic Space in Islam* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), p. 37.
10. Campo, *The Other Side of Paradise*, p. 37.
11. *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, 2 vols. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939), p. 157.
12. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 6, p. 30.

13. Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: form, function, and meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), chapter 3.

14. Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 9, pp. 194–95. See also vol. 7, pp. 11–12 for minarets.

15. Shāh ‘Abbās, for example, married one of his daughters to the general of the musketeers, a major officer of the state. See Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 235–36, and also vol. 6, pp. 16–30.

16. Banarasi Prasad Saxena, *History of Shahjahan of Dihli* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1968), pp. 338–41. Chardin also told the same story in *Voyages*, vol. 2, pp. 241–42.

17. Rekha Misra, *Women in Mughal India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), p. 60.

18. Misra, *Women in Mughal India*, p. 90.

19. Misra, *Women in Mughal India*, p. 115.

20. Misra, *Women in Mughal India*, pp. 44–45.

21. Misra, *Women in Mughal India*, pp. 63, 75.

22. Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, *Der Bazar von Isfahan* (Weisbaden, 1978), p. 150; Lutfallah Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-i Āsār-i Tārikh-i Isfahan*, 2nd: ed., (Tehran: Saghafi Bookshop, 1350/1971–72), pp. 555–56; ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Sipanta, *Tārikhcha-i Auqāf-i Isfahan*, (Isfahan: Idarah Kol Auqaf Muntaqa-i Isfahan, 1346/1927–28), pp. 347–48.

23. Gaube and Wirth, *Der Bazar*, p. 141; Chardin, *Voyages*, 7: 396–97.

24. “A List of the Caravansarais of Isfahan,” Persian Manuscript Collection, Sloane 4094, British Library, London, lines 103–17.

25. Gaube and Wirth, *Der Bazar*, p. 213; Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, pp. 679–81; Sipanta, *Tārikhcha*, p. 349.

26. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 40.

27. Muḥammad Waris, “Padshah Namah,” Persian Manuscript Collection, Add. 6556, British Library, London, fol. 406; Muḥammad Šāliḥ Kanbo Lahaurī, *‘Amal-i Šāliḥ*, ed. G. Yazdani, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1912–46), vol. 3, p. 35.

28. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 55.

29. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 119.

30. Lahaurī, *‘Amal-i Šāliḥ*, vol. 3, p. 48; Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, 1656–68*, ed. Archibald Constable; trans. Irving Brock (Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1972), pp. 280–81; Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, trans. William Irvine, 4 vols. (Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1965), vol. 1, pp. 212–13.

31. Andrea Butenschen, *The Life of a Mogul Princess, Jahanara Begum, Daughter of Shahjahan* (London, 1931), p. 30.

32. Lahaurī, *‘Amal-i Šāliḥ*, vol. 3, p. 48.

33. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 56.

34. Y.D. Sharma, *Delhi and Its Neighborhood*, 2d. ed. (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1974), p. 139; Archeological Survey of India, *List of Muhammadan and Hindu Monuments in Delhi Zail*, 4 vols. (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1915-22), vol. 2, pp. 266-67.
35. Şayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Āsār al-Sanādīd* (Delhi, 1965), rpt., pp. 288-89.
36. Khān, *Āsār al-Sanādīd*, p. 299.
37. William Franklin, "An Account of the Present State of Delhi," *Asiatick Researches* 4 (1795), p. 421.
38. Misra, *Women in Mughal India*, p. 63.

ARMED WOMEN RETAINERS IN THE  
ZENANAS OF INDO-MUSLIM RULERS:  
THE CASE OF BIBI FAṬĪMA

*Gavin R. G. Hambly*

*Although little is known regarding how the zenana was administered, sources from Muslim India describe the maintenance of order by ūrdūbegīs, armed women retainers, who were in effect female mamlūks.*

Few aspects of Islamic civilization have been as misunderstood or as immersed in fantasy as the women's quarters in the households of Muslim rulers and other members of the ruling elite, quarters variously referred to as the harem, the seraglio, or the zenana, words long assimilated into English from Arabic, Turkish, or Persian. The original prototype of this institution was the simple division of a house into two parts: the private space occupied by women [in Persian, *andarūn*], and the public space occupied by men [*bīrūn*]. The latter, by extension, reached out beyond the confines of the place of residence to the public world of streets, bazaars, bathhouses, mosques, shrines, etc., spaces which were accessible to women in comparatively restricted circumstances. Only men of means were in a position to maintain the kind of elaborate female households implied by the terms harem or zenana, and it is with such households that this paper is concerned. The harem or zenana has hitherto been the object of scant scholarly attention, possibly because of an assumption that little in the way of reliable source-materials exists for an institution the prime object of which was to maximize privacy and also because, for reasons of propriety, it was assumed that medieval Muslim historians, and indeed writers of all kinds, were reluctant to write about the lives of their rulers' or patrons' womenfolk.<sup>1</sup>

European writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whether bona fide travellers in the Islamic world or stay-at-homes with imaginations run riot, saw the harem or zenana as a quintessential place of incarceration, a symbol of brutal servitude and unrestrained lust.<sup>2</sup> When Europeans thought of the institution at all, they usually thought first and foremost of an existing structure, the women's quarters of the Topkapı Saray, the Ottoman sultān's palace in Istanbul, associated for English readers with such writings as *Letters from the East* by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) or, in their minds' eye, with contemporary engravings by, say, Thomas Allom (1804–72), purporting to show the faithless queen or concubine, sewn up in a sack, being dropped from a boat into the Bosphorus off Saray Point by grim-faced eunuchs. In fact, because the Topkapı Saray was, and remains, among the best-preserved of traditional Muslim rulers' palaces, it has become in some sense the epitome of a Muslim harem. Of it, its most recent historian, Gülru Necipoğlu, has written:

Unlike the other spaces of the palace, arranged around large ceremonial courts or open gardens, the harem consisted of a constellation of fragmented spaces enveloped by high walls and blocked from access with a large number of successive gates. No wonder it came to be associated in the West with a prisonlike, labyrinthine space designed for intrigue, where deprivation and sensual licentiousness lived side by side.<sup>3</sup>

Necipoğlu further points to the relationship between the architectural form of the harem's structures and the requirements of its master:

The harem, the 'Abode of Felicity,' was designed with a view to giving the utmost pleasure to only one person, the omnipotent sultan. Everyone else was deprived by degrees of the privileges and pleasures which he could enjoy. Only he and the eunuchs could mediate between the closely guarded and sharply delineated women's space and that of the men; everyone else was obliged to live a life of celibacy, except when the sultan desired a companion. The monastic spaces in the inner palace reflected an obsession with boundaries, the separation of opposite categories, and the rigid classification of ranks which only the sultan could transcend.

To reinforce her point, Necipoğlu then contrasts the "light and brightness" of the sultan's apartments "with the dark, windowless,

inward-turning and undecorated nonroyal spaces, where eunuchs and female slaves were taught humility, obedience and abstinence.”<sup>4</sup> While this evocation of harem life certainly has validity, it must be supplemented by images of alternative domestic arrangements, still exclusive and distanced from the everyday world, but reflecting the more informal social arrangements of semi-nomadic dynasties and elites: of Saljūkids, Ilkhānids, Ćaghatāyids, and Tīmūrids, dynasties where ruler and government were peripatetic, where much time was spent in tents or yurts, where women moved around on horseback or by some other means of transport, and were integrally involved in the affairs of clan or tribe. These rather different norms are strongly evoked in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s account of the doings of the womenfolk of the Batu’id Khān, Özbek (712–42/1313–41), or in a vivid passage of al-Maqrīzī describing the household of the Mamlūk Sulṭān al-Şālih ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl (743–46/1342–45):

He was infatuated with the black slave girls and he was excessively in love with Itrifāq [a celebrated black lutanist].... He fostered all kinds of entertainers, and he discarded his duties as a ruler by his preoccupation with women and singers. The preoccupation reached such a degree, that when he made his seasonal rides [from the Citadel] to Sīryaqus or the Pyramids, his mother, together with another 200 women, would accompany him riding *akādish* horses [horses of mixed breeds<sup>5</sup>], and wearing coloured satin dresses and *ṭarṭūr* headgear of Bulgarian leather [a cone-shaped bonnet<sup>6</sup>], inlaid with gems and pearls, and accompanied by eunuchs from the Citadel to the promenading ground. The sultan’s favourite concubines used to ride [in these processions] Arab horses, racing against each other, playing polo and wearing silk *kāmiliyya* [mantles, cloaks<sup>7</sup>] overcoats.<sup>8</sup>

The Sulṭān, his mother, 200 concubines and the eunuchs riding out beneath the pyramids, the gaily dressed women in their brightly colored silk robes testing the mettle of their mounts and wielding their polo-sticks, offer an image in striking contrast to that of the the dark and airless Ottoman harem, an image evocative of the steppe-world of Central Asia and one which is replicated in numerous Indian miniatures of women playing polo, hunting, and even riding into battle.

Contrary to popular European assumptions, the *zenana* was not a confined space inhabited exclusively by wives and concubines, but rather consisted of a diverse community of women of varying ages interacting with each other in many different ways and at many

different levels. In addition to wives and concubines (together with their young children of both sexes), the zenana might serve as the home for a man's widowed mother, his late father's other wives, widowed or unmarried aunts and cousins, and other distant female relatives and dependents, some perhaps objects of familial charity, as well as slaves and servants, many of whom performed specific tasks and held skilled occupations. Visitors would include female friends and relatives, midwives, astrologers, poets, musicians and dancers, pedlars, and artisans—all female. When Abu'l Faḍl, confidant and chronicler of the Mughal emperor Akbar (963–1014/1556–1605), described Akbar's zenana as containing more than five thousand women, each with her own apartment, it was just such a complex establishment and a largely self-regulating community of women which he had in mind.<sup>9</sup> Even Awrangzīb (1068–1118/1658–1707), most austere of the Mughals, had, according to Manucci, 2,000 women in his zenana.<sup>10</sup>

The administration and fiscal organization of a zenana of this size was proportionately elaborate and demanded, in addition to a complement of eunuchs, a hierarchy of female bureaucrats. In the case of Mughal India, these were headed by a much-respected female with the title of *ṣadr-i anās*, with a wide range of functions, some of which are to be found itemized in the *Shāh Jahān-nāma*:

Even in the sacred seraglio, His Majesty [*Shāh Jahān*—unlike other negligent Kings—refrains from indulging in carnal lusts and sensual pleasures, and instead devotes himself to granting requests of the poor. In this regard, the chaste and innocent Sati al-Nisā' *Khānum*, who owing to her confidence, eloquent tongue, excellent service and noble etiquette is fortunate enough to serve Her Majesty the Queen of the Age [*Mumtāz Maḥall*] in the performance of urgent work and the transaction of business, always presents to that illustrious and chaste Queen the requests of the poor and helpless. That Lady of the auspicious seraglio then lays them before the God-worshipping Emperor, and the world thus realizes its aspirations. Indigent women, according to their condition, are assigned grants of land, daily allowances or cash. Some unmarried girls, who owing to their poverty and indigence cannot afford the necessaries of marriage, receive according to their family and condition, ornaments, clothes, money and other things which are indispensable for the wedding ceremony, and are then married to their equals. Every day in this most sacred palace, a considerable amount of money and ornaments are expended for this charitable purpose."

Sati al-Nisā' *Khānum* was a Persian, being the elder sister of Jahāngīr's poet-laureate, Abū Ṭālib-i Āmulī (d. 1036/1616 or 1617), to whom the emperor gave the title of *malik al-shu'arā* [King of Poets].<sup>12</sup> After establishing himself at the Mughal court, Abū Ṭālib arranged for his sister to come to Agra from Iran, presumably from Amul. She entered the Mughal zenana and was attached to the suite of Mumtāz Maḥall. When Mumtāz Maḥall died in 1041–42/1631, she accompanied the dead queen's corpse from Burhanpur to Agra.<sup>13</sup> Thereafter, Sati al-Nisā' *Khānum* was officially appointed *ṣadr-i anās*.<sup>14</sup> She is mentioned as supervising, together with the princess Jahānārā Begam, the wedding of Prince Dārā with a daughter of the late Prince Parvīz in 1042/1633, which had been postponed as a result of Mumtāz Maḥall's death.<sup>15</sup> In 1044–45/1635, she was in Lahore, nursing Prince Murād, who was recovering from small-pox.<sup>16</sup> In an earlier period, the position of *ṣadr-i anās* was filled towards the end of Akbar's reign and early in Jahāngīr's by a foster-sister of Akbar, Ḥajjī Kōka, one of whose brothers, Sa'ādat Yar Kōka, accompanied the first official *hajj* of the reign, while another married a daughter of Abu'l Faḍl's son, a reminder of the intimate ties between the *pādshāhs*, their foster-mothers, foster-brothers, and foster-sisters.<sup>17</sup> Later, during Jahāngīr's reign, Dā'i Dilārām, a former nurse of Nūr Jahān, was appointed *ṣadr-i anās*.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the *ṣadr-i anās* seems to have presided over a self-contained world which called for specific administrative and security arrangements which transcended the stereotypical preoccupation with upholding male honor by ensuring the total seclusion of its master's womenfolk. For this immense household had to be housed, fed, clothed, transported, and its hundred and one daily needs provided for. It was also the place where the *pādshāh* relaxed and slept, and was consequently at his most defenceless.<sup>19</sup> It was where the young children of the *pādshāh* (and perhaps of other members of the imperial family) were raised. It also contained a mass of valuable property, regalia, jewelry, and treasure, while during some reigns the imperial seals were kept in the zenana, entailing the transference of administrative documents into the women's quarters for authentication.<sup>20</sup> Taking all this into account, it comes as no surprise that the protection of the zenana was regarded as being of the utmost importance. To ensure its security, to prevent unauthorized entry or exit, and to maintain order among so many people, an elaborate system of policing was essential.



Abu'l Faḍl's description of Akbar's zenana at the core of the Mughal ruling institution reflects the concern with security:

The inside of the harem is guarded by sober and active women; the most trustworthy of them are placed about the apartments of his Majesty. Outside the enclosure the eunuchs are placed: and at a proper distance, there is a guard of Rajputs, beyond whom are the porters at the gates.<sup>21</sup>

Abu'l Faḍl is describing the arrangements at the center of the Mughal camp, the *urdū-yi mu'allā*, as much as those prevailing in the palace-forts of Delhi, Agra, or Lahore, the commonly envisioned setting for the Mughal zenana. The porters at the gates, the Rajput bodyguard, and the eunuchs are all predictable elements in the protection of an Indo-Muslim ruler's womenfolk, but the Amazonian retainers are not, and arouse curiosity.<sup>22</sup>

Muslim authors tended to be reticent in regard to matters relating to the female establishments of their rulers, whether as a matter of propriety or out of personal ignorance. Somewhat exceptional in this regard is the Mughal historian, Khwāja Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad, whose *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*, a chronicle of Muslim rule in India down to 1003/1593-94, includes many references to women. In particular, writing of pre-Mughal times, he provides a most interesting account of the zenana of the second Khaljī ruler of Malwa, Sulṭān Ghiyāth Shāh (873-906/1469-1500).<sup>23</sup> According to Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad, Ghiyāth Shāh, on succeeding his father, Maḥmud Shāh, declared that after years of strenuous campaigning during his late father's reign, he now intended to enjoy his kingship, eschew foreign adventures, and cultivate the arts of peace. Thus, having designated his eldest son as his heir and conferred upon him the office of *vazīr*, and having established an orderly routine for the *amīrs* and *maliks* who attended at court, he withdrew from active participation in government to enjoy the fruits of piety and self-gratification.

Ghiyāth Shāh is described as filling his zenana with beautiful slavegirls as well as the daughters of local rajas and *zamīndārs*, obtained by the exertions of his procurers (activities which eventually had to be reined in because of the resentment which they aroused).<sup>24</sup> He was alleged to have possessed sixteen thousand slave-girls, all of whom, he insisted, had to acquire a skill: singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, reading aloud, reciting the Qur'ān, and even wrestling. Further,

He also trained five hundred slave girls, who were distinguished for the strength of their genius and the keenness of their intelligence, in various kinds of learning; and he had one of them join him every day at his meals. He selected a number of them, and entrusted various affairs of state, such as the office of demands, and the watching of receipts and expenditure of the country, and the supervision of various factories, to them.<sup>25</sup>

As a mark of his intense religiosity,

He had ordered seventy slave girls, who had memorised the holy *Quran*, that at the time when he changed his clothes they would finish the *Quran* and blow their breath on the garment.<sup>26</sup>

As in the case of Akbar a century later, Ghiyāth Shāh's zenana must have been elaborately organized. Within it, he established a market in which whatever was sold in the bazaars of Mandu, his capital, was also available there, and each woman received a daily allowance of two silver *tankas* and two *mans* of grain. He was so strict in allocating this allowance that the head of the zenana, Rānī Khūrshīd, who would later play a significant role in the politics of the court, received the same amount as the rest.<sup>27</sup> Some hyperbole may be assumed in the account of sixteen thousand slave-girls in Ghiyāth Shāh's zenana, for the housing and feeding of such a number in strict seclusion would have presented formidable logistical problems. However, the statement must have been intended to convey the impression of an unusually sensual and self-indulgent ruler of eccentric piety (he is said to have instructed his servants to place cooked food daily at the entrance to the rat- and mice-holes of the palace). A combination of love for women and devotion to religion was by no means restricted to this one ruler. According to Muḥammad Qāsim Firishṭa, the eighth Bahmanid Sulṭān of the Deccan, Tāj al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh (800–25/1397–1422), founded the city of Firuzabad on the river Bhima partly as a kind of playground for the women of his zenana. He writes:

Near the river was erected a citadel of stone, divided into a number of splendid courts, detached from each other, all plentifully supplied with water conducted by an ample canal from the river. Each of these courts he committed to one of his favourite ladies; and to avoid confusion and irregularity among his women, he framed rules for his harem, which were strictly observed during his life.

In the female apartments, he allowed no more than three attendants to one lady, who were of the same nation, and spoke the

same language as their mistress. Merchants were constantly employed to purchase females of all nations, from amongst whom he made selections to supply the vacancies occasioned by death or other causes among his mistresses or their servants. In his harem were Arabs, Circassians, Georgians, Turks, Russians, Europeans, Chinese, Afghans, Rajputs, Bengalis, Gujaratis, Tilanganis, Marathas, and others; and he could converse with each in her own language. He divided his attention so equally among them, that each lady fancied herself most beloved of the king.<sup>28</sup>

Firīṣhta added that although Fīrūz Shāh respected the tenets of all faiths, what he admired above all else in Islam was the Prophet's injunction that women should be concealed from the eyes of strangers. Although Richard Eaton cautions that it should not be supposed that Firuzabad "served merely as a royal language lab or a multi-ethnic playpen,"<sup>29</sup> he himself quotes the statement of Firīṣhta's contemporary, Rāfi' al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī's that Tāj al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh resided in Firuzabad "in enjoyment and the gratification of his desires."<sup>30</sup> And while Firīṣhta possesses a reputation for overstatement, there seems no reason to doubt that in this instance he is describing excessive uxoriousness. Presumably, the intention behind the segregation of the women according to their language-group was to isolate them culturally and prevent them from communicating with each other, thereby hindering them from intriguing against him or undermining his authority.

Another Indo-Muslim chronicler, Shaykh Sikandar ibn Muḥammad Manjhū (961–post 1020/1553–1611), in his history of the sultanate of Gujarat known as *Mīr'āt-i Sikandarī*, provides a further instance of luxuriant zenana life although, in this case, the zenana belonged to a Purbiya Rajput, Silhadi of Raisen (d. 938–39/1532):

It is said that the expenditure in Silhadi's household on women's dresses and perfumes exceeded that in any king's palace. He had four *akharas*, that is to say, 'bands' of dancing-girls, who were each unrivalled in their special art. Forty women held the torches while the dancing-girls performed. Every dancing-girl, moreover, had two attendants, one of whom held her *pan*-box, and the other poured sweet-scented oil on the torches, for they never burnt any bad scented oil, nor any that was not odorous, that is, not scented with rose-perfume. All the women's clothes were of gold brocade, or embroidered with gold. <sup>31</sup>

The three passages quoted above present the zenana as an institution providing for eccentric behavior and extravagant self-indulgence on the part of rulers of sufficient wealth and unlimited authority. Indeed, on the strength of such statements, as well as the erotic material embedded in works like *The Thousand and One Nights*, it may be supposed that the sensual and exotic stereotypes of zenana life projected by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European Orientalists, whether scholars, romance-writers, or painters, had their origin in the indigenous values of elite Islamic society rather than, as is sometimes asserted, their own prurient imaginings.

In the account of Ghiyāth Shāh's zenana, as described by Khawāja Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad, there is an interesting reference to armed female retainers:

He had five hundred Abyssinian slave girls dressed in male attire, and arming them with swords and shields gave them the name of the *Habiwash* band. He also called five hundred Turki slave girls in the Turki dress as the Mughal band.<sup>32</sup>

Firīḡhta, writing later, describes these retainers a little differently and in more detail:

Five hundred beautiful young Turki females in men's clothes, and uniformly clad, armed with bows and arrows, stood on his right hand, and were called the Turki guard. On his left were five hundred Abyssinian females also dressed uniformly, armed with fire-arms.<sup>33</sup>

These two passages, describing the Amazonian bodyguards of a fifteenth-century ruler of Malwa, provide a gloss on Abu'l Faḍl's account of "sober and active women...placed about the apartments of his Majesty."<sup>34</sup> Who were these women who appear to have combined the roles of personal attendants and well-armed (and presumably, well-trained) bodyguards of sufficient physical strength to protect the ruler's person, to ensure the safety of the zenana, and perhaps to serve as enforcers? Most, but not all, would have been slaves [a kind of female *mamlūk*] and of diverse ethnic backgrounds. In the middle of the seventeenth century, François Bernier, watching with awe the procession of 66 elephants leaving Delhi carrying the princess Raṣṣhanārā Begam, Awrangzīb's younger sister, and her entourage, saw "surrounding her elephant, a troop of female servants, *Tartars* and *Kachmerys*, fantastically attired and riding handsome pad-horses."<sup>35</sup> It may have been reasons of security which led to

most of these women being recruited from far afield. Ghiyāth Shāh's female guards were Habāshīs from Ethiopia or Turks from Central Asia. Bernier mentions Tartars and Kashmirīs as forming Raṣhanārā Begam's guard. A common term applied to them was *qilmāqanī*, or Kalmucks, used imprecisely to mean Central Asians in general, and perhaps implying that they possessed Mongol features.<sup>36</sup>

That these women were not merely for show but were well able to take care of their imperial charges is confirmed in a story told by 'Ināyat Khān that, following Awrangzīb's victory over his brother Dārā at Samugarh (1068/1658), a plot was laid (which was revealed by Shāyista Khān, Awrangzīb's uncle) to lure the victor into the Agra Fort, where "the Emperor [Shāh Jahān] planned to have him murdered by Tartar female slaves as soon as he entered the precincts of the seraglio."<sup>37</sup> Bernier heard the same rumor, although he thought that it was the princess Jahānārā Begam who had concocted the plot to lure Awrangzīb into the inner apartments: "There were collected in the fortress [i.e., the zenana] several large and robust *Tartar* women, such as are employed in the seraglio, for the purpose of falling upon him with arms in their hands, as soon as he entered the fortress."<sup>38</sup> As already noted, Awrangzīb was too artful to fall for this ruse, but the "large and robust *Tartar* women," capable of overcoming a seasoned warrior such as Awrangzīb, must have been formidable enforcers within the confines of the zenana.

The term commonly used for these armed women was the Čaghatāy Turkish word, *ūrdūbegī*.<sup>39</sup> Such women were not necessarily confined to the zenana but would escort the zenana women when the latter left the zenana, whether to accompany husbands, brothers, or sons on campaign or on their frequent peregrinations, to hunt or to play polo, to visit pleasure-gardens or shrines, to go on pilgrimage or, in the seventeenth century, to travel to Kashmir. Such expeditions would have involved complicated logistics to ensure the appropriate degree of privacy and seclusion, and must have involved large numbers of palace-retainers, servants, slaves, and beasts of burden. Among all these, the *ūrdūbegīs*, who were perhaps only partially or even not at all veiled, would need to be well-mounted, accomplished at handling weapons, physically strong, and alert.<sup>40</sup> Whatever the case elsewhere in the Islamic world, Indo-Islamic courts seem to have been accustomed to the notion of women of the ruling elite emerging (with due propriety) from behind the walls of the zenana.

This assumption, enshrined in chronicles, romances, and, above all, in miniature paintings, reflected both the Turko-Mongol social milieu of the Central Asian invaders of Hindustan, and the traditional attitudes towards their women of the Tīmūrid and Čaghatayid ruling houses, from which the Indian Mughals were descended.<sup>41</sup> Apart from the documented public appearances of such figures as Raḍiyya bint Iltutmish (634–37/1236–40), Bībī Chānd of Ahmadnagar (d. 1008–09/1600), Nūr Jahān, and other prominent women of the Mughal imperial house, folkloric tradition and popular romance allocated to elite women a considerable degree of freedom of movement. Thus, for example, the historic struggle between ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh Khaljī of Delhi (695–715/1296–1316) and the Chauhan Rajput ruler of Rantambhor, Rana Hammir, which ended with the fall of Ranthambhor in 700/1301, was represented in the several *Hammir Kavyas* (largely fictional epics centering upon the heroism of Rana Hammir) as being initiated by the audacious conduct of one of the Sulṭān’s queens:

Sulṭān Ala-ud-din Khilji went out hunting, together with his seraglio, and encamped in a jungle. A *kanāt* (or canvas wall) was pitched round an extensive enclosure to form a *parda* to enable the members of the harem to hunt the game freely. When the zenana party and the king were busy in this pursuit, one of the queens, in pursuing a deer that had jumped over the *kanāt*, happened to gallop across the enclosure. There she saw a Mongol soldier guarding the royal camp. Attracted by his graceful appearance and manly behaviour, she became enamoured. While they were engaged in amorous dalliance, a lion came out of a thicket close by and began to roar [thereby initiating the subsequent epic course of events].<sup>42</sup>

In Indian painting, both Muslim and Hindu, scenes of women riding on horseback or elephantback, hunting, playing polo, and even engaging in warfare occur frequently and imply that artists, at least, did not find such activities intrinsically improbable or far-fetched. In contrast to contemporary Europe, women did not ride side-saddle and in most miniatures the women are shown unveiled. This may constitute artistic license, but some of these activities would be positively dangerous if there was a risk of restricted or impaired vision, as on a tiger-hunt. On the other hand, women are also represented as riding veiled on horseback and the seventeenth-century traveller, Peter Mundy, who was sufficiently interested in

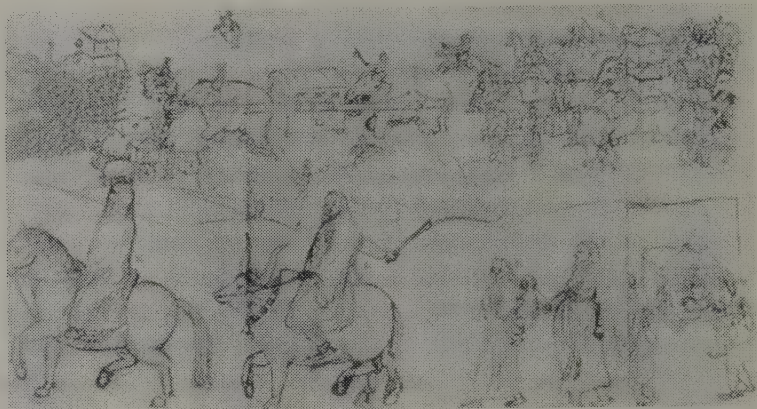


Figure 1: Forms of female transportation in Mughal India. Drawing by Peter Mundy (17th century). Courtesy of the British Museum.

the way in which Indian women travelled to sketch a montage of the various modes, included a portrayal of what he described as a “woman of the better fashion on Horseback astride, quite covered over from head to foote with linnen; before her Eyes a Nettinge works or Gateinge to see through” (see figure 1).<sup>43</sup> Either way, with noblewomen roaming over the countryside, even if on highly-regimented expeditions, the *ūrdūbegīs* obviously had their work cut out for them.

Their physical strength has already been alluded to, and this would also be an essential qualification for other zenana servants as well, such as palanquin-bearers, who, in some situations, were numbered with the *ūrdūbegīs*. Elite women, when not on horseback, travelled in a variety of conveyances: the bullock-drawn carriages [*rath*], the closed elephant howdah [*amāri*]; the litter slung between two camels [*kajāba*] (see figure 2); the *chandūl*, a large palanquin with six, eight, or more bearers; the *pālkī*, or medium-sized litter, requiring fewer bearers; and the *dolī*, the smallest size of litter. For short distances, and especially for entering into or exiting from the

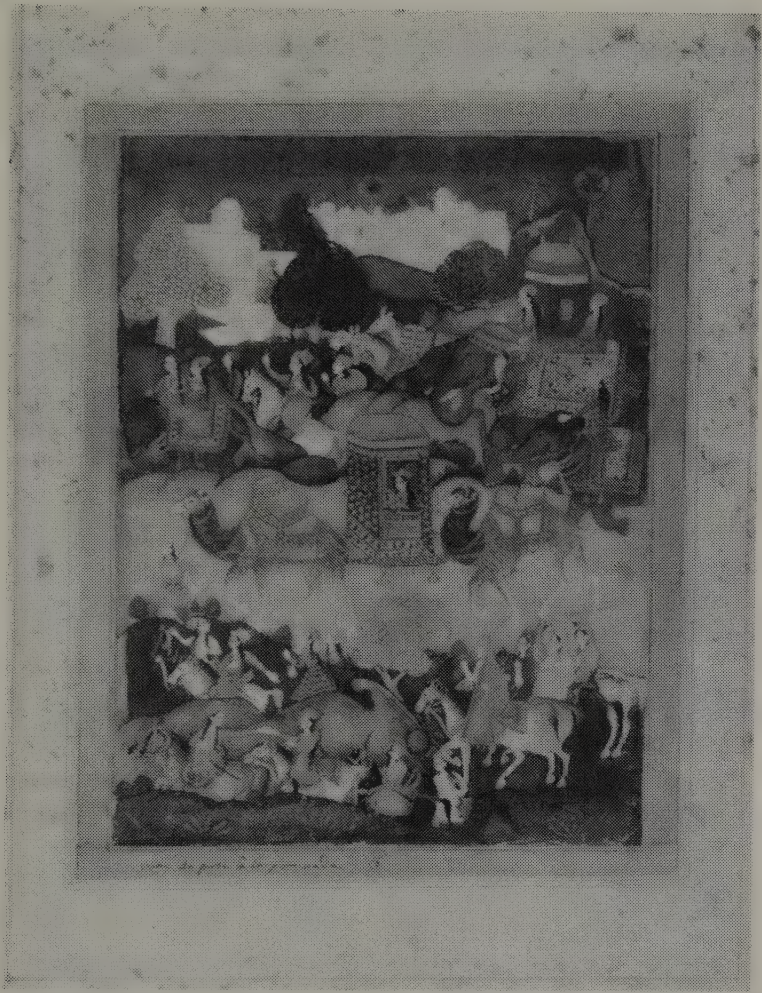


Figure 2: A Mughal princess traveling in a kajāba carried by two camels (18th century). Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.



zenana quarter, women would have to replace men in carrying these latter contraptions.

There exists from the period when the old Mughal order was disappearing, an account of the procession of the Pādshāh Begam, the mother of Ghāzī al-Dīn Ḥaydar, King of Awadh (1814–27), passing through the streets of Lucknow. An English observer watched the Begam's immense *chandūl* [the Urdu term for the largest litter handled by human bearers] go by carried by twenty liveried male bearers and "surrounded by very powerful women bearers, whose business it is to convey the vehicle within the compound (court-yard) of the private apartments, or wherever men are not admitted at the same time with females."<sup>44</sup> There followed the closed bullock-wagons containing the Begam's women of inferior rank, with a space between the front curtains and the driver's seat "where one or two women servants are seated as guards, who are privileged by age and ugliness to indulge in the liberty of seeing the passing gaiety, and of enjoying, without a screen, the pure air; benefits which their superiors in rank are excluded from at all ages."<sup>45</sup>

Another foreign observer of the Awadh court noted the ambiguous status of these palanquin-bearers, who were presumably slave-women:

Another class of attendants at the palace peculiar to Lucknow were the female *bearers*,—labourers we should call them, perhaps. Their occupation was to carry the palanquins, and various covered conveyances of the king and his ladies into the inner courts of the harem. These female bearers were also under military discipline. They had their officers, commissioned and noncommissioned. The head of them, a great masculine woman, of pleasing countenance, was an especial favourite with the king. The *badinage* which was exchanged between them was of the freest possible character—not fit for ears polite of course; but the extraordinary point of it was, that no one hearing it, or witnessing such scenes, could have supposed it possible that a king and a slave stood before him as the two tongue-combatants. This very chief of the female bearers, I have since heard from one who was in Lucknow at the time, was the poisoner of Nussir [Nāṣir al-Dīn Ḥaydar, King of Awadh, 1827–37]—bribed thereto by some member of the royal family.<sup>46</sup>

This example of the indulgence that could be permitted to a trusted slave confirms the probability that retainers responsible for the ruler's

safety and for undertaking secret commissions were likely to enjoy a greater degree of license than most other members of the zenana.

#### THE CASE OF BIBI FĀṬIMA

Only one example of an *ūrdūbegī*, to whom a name and some biographical information can be attached, seems to occur in the sources.<sup>47</sup> This was Bībī Fāṭima, chief *ūrdūbegī* in the zenana of the Mughal *pādshāh* Humāyūn (937–47/1530–40 and 962–63/1555–56) and perhaps also *ṣadr-i anās* [superintendent of the zenana] during part of the reign of Akbar (903–1014/1556–1605). The term *bībī* derives from Čaghatāy Turkish,<sup>48</sup> and she herself was presumably a Turk. There is some circumstantial evidence which may link her to the Čaghatāyid Qāqshāl clan. She was a wet-nurse to Humāyūn, who was born in 913/1508, and so she was herself likely to have been born in the early 1490's. The earliest reference to her occurs in the *Humāyūn-nāma* of Gulbadan Begam, in which, listing the guests present at a marriage-feast for Hindāl Mīrzā, one of Humāyūn's younger brothers, in 944/1537–38, she is first mentioned. Although Gulbadan's memoirs were written many years later, she includes a list of 87 prominent women present on that occasion or at a previous feast commemorating Humāyūn's accession, and Bībī Fāṭima's name is ranked sixtieth on the list. Gulbadan refers to her as "Fāṭima Sulṭān Ānkā, mother of Raūshan Kōka."<sup>49</sup> The title Sulṭān is an honorific, perhaps indicating her status in the imperial harem during Akbar's reign (when the memoirs were written). The term *ānkā*, another Čaghatāy word, meant "wet-nurse."<sup>50</sup> The term *kōka* applied to her son Raūshan Beg, is also significant, for it too is Čaghatāy and meant a foster-brother, one who shared his mother's milk with a baby-prince, with whom, thereafter, lifelong bonding was supposed to take place.<sup>51</sup> Her status as a wet-nurse to Humāyūn would explain her subsequent importance: her presence at Hindāl Mīrzā's wedding; her title of *ūrdūbegī-yi Maḥall* ['*ūrdūbegī* of the palace'; i.e., the principal *ūrdūbegī*] during an episode in which she guarded Humāyūn's person during a near-fatal illness in the midst of a grave political crisis;<sup>52</sup> her presence on a diplomatic mission despatched to Badakhshan by Humāyūn; and her daughter's distinguished (although ultimately tragic) marriage to Akbar's mother's brother.

The first known incident in which Bībī Fāṭima came to the fore was connected with the Badakhshanī ruling family. In 952/1545,

Humāyūn, newly returned from exile in Iran, gained possession of Kandahar from his half-brother, 'Askarī Mīrzā, and thereafter, Kabul, from his eldest half-brother Kāmṛān Mīrzā. In the following summer (953/1546), he decided to launch an expedition across the Hindu Kush mountains to reassert his paternal claims to Andarab, Khost, Kunduz, and, ultimately, Badakhshan. It was a hazardous undertaking, in view of the fact that Humāyūn's control over southern and eastern Afghanistan was still uncertain and that he could expect continued challenges to his authority there, especially from Kāmṛān Mīrzā, then a fugitive in Bhakhar under the protection of Shāh Ḥusayn Arghūn, ruler of Sind. Still, he took what precautions he could. 'Askarī Mīrzā was forced to accompany him as a hostage, while his third brother, Hindāl Mīrzā, whose behaviour had been less outrageous than that of the other two, was also taken along. After leaving Kabul, Humāyūn sent back an order to the governor of the city for the execution of another incorrigibly treacherous kinsman, Yādgār Nāṣir Mīrzā, the son of Bābur's half-brother.

Humāyūn's principal objective was the capture of Badakhshan and its ruler, Sulaymān Mīrzā. Genealogy, although perhaps not much else, made Sulaymān Mīrzā formidable, because, like Humāyūn himself, his bloodlines combined both Čaghatāyid and Tīmūrid ancestry, making him a potential rallying-point for the disaffected. In reality, he was no soldier, but an intriguer and a meddler, but he was still capable of causing Humāyūn serious embarrassment. Near Andarab, Humāyūn's expedition clashed with and dispersed a force put into the field by Sulaymān Mīrzā, who fled across the Amu-Darya. Humāyūn then moved to Kunduz, where he left Hindāl Mīrzā as governor. He then turned east to Kishm where he lingered for several months, organizing these transmontane tracts and preparing for an advance into the heart of Badakhshan. A decision was then taken to winter in Qal'a-yi Zafar, on the left bank of the Kokcha river, a tributary of the Amu-Darya. But before he was able to reach his destination, he was taken seriously ill and became seemingly incapacitated for the next two months. For a ruler fresh from exile, whose authority was far from effectively established, this was a crisis which threatened to undermine everything achieved in the preceding months. Tīmūrid authority in the region was always volatile and fragmented, and it was not

long before it was being reported that Humāyūn was dead. In consequence, some of his officers quit their posts and returned to Kabul, fearing for the safety of their families in what were anticipated would be serious disorders, since Kāmṛān Mīrzā's return to Kabul could be taken for granted. Hindāl Mīrzā, looking to his own interests, advanced from Kunduz to assert his claims in place of his presumed-dead brother. Sulaymān Mīrzā's defeated and dispersed *begs* reappeared on the scene to claim the territories formerly relinquished.

In this emergency, Humāyūn's *vazīr*, Qarāča Khān, displayed great presence of mind. In anticipation of a coup d'état or an assassination attempt against the *pādshāh*, 'Askarī Mīrzā was placed under close arrest. Qarāča Khān ordered the tents of all the loyal *begs* to be erected in the immediate vicinity of Humāyūn's pavilion, which was thus virtually sealed off from outside access, except for physicians and confidential servants. Eventually, Humāyūn recovered and the crisis was over. Hindāl Mīrzā retreated to Kunduz, the Badakhshanī *begs* melted away, and Humāyūn himself, having learnt that Kāmṛān Mīrzā had again raised the banner of revolt and had occupied Kabul, patched up a hasty peace with Sulaymān Mīrzā, and set off on the dangerous mid-winter march to Kabul. It had been a most perilous episode in a career filled with danger.<sup>53</sup>

It was in the camp between Kishm and Qal'a-yi Zafar that Bībī Fāṭima makes her appearance. While the surviving accounts of Humāyūn's sudden and debilitating illness differ, a contemporary observer present in the camp, Bāyazīd Bīyāt, asserts that throughout the crisis, Bībī Fāṭima, "*urdūbegī* of the palace, left nothing undone so far as attendance on his majesty was needed."<sup>54</sup> Although he does not spell out the details, other accounts imply that the danger of an assassination attempt or a coup d'état was real enough, and thus Humāyūn's safety must have in part depended upon her vigilance.<sup>55</sup>

The story of Bībī Fāṭima can be taken a little further. After predictable difficulties with Kāmṛān Mīrzā, and with his northern marches still unstable and exposed to Uzbek raids, Humāyūn decided to try to bind the volatile Sulaymān Mīrzā to his cause by a marriage alliance between himself and the Mīrzā's daughter, Shāhzāda Khānūm. This was in 957/1550, when his affairs seemed to have taken an upward turn. To head the embassy to Sulaymān Mīrzā, Humāyūn chose Khwāja Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud. This man had been

a revenue-officer of 'Askarī Mīrzā, who had cut off his nose for some offence, as a result of which perhaps he had transferred himself to Humāyūn's service and had been appointed *mīr sāmān* [steward of the household]. He was instructed to take 'Askarī Mīrzā, who had been under house arrest since Humāyūn's illness, to Sulaymān Mīrzā, who was to send him to Mecca. *Khwāja* Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud was an unusual choice for such an important mission, for he appears to have been a man of no great social standing. That Humāyūn chose such a person, an intimate member of the household, instead of a distinguished *beg* is perhaps a measure of how much he felt himself to be surrounded by men whom he could not trust.<sup>56</sup> Bibī Fāṭima went with the envoy, presumably to handle the more intimate details of the marriage arrangements, since she took with her jewelry, dresses, and sweet-meats obligatory for the betrothal ceremony.<sup>57</sup> Included in the entourage was Bāyazīd Bīyāt, who afterwards provided the most authentic account of the mission.

He describes the route: from Kabul, via the Panjshir valley to Khost, Farkhar, and Qala Anghan. In the last, they found Sulaymān Mīrzā's wife, Haram Begam, together with his son, Ibrāhīm Mīrzā.<sup>58</sup> According to Bāyazīd Bīyāt, the encounter was entirely fortuitous. It seems that Humāyūn's brother, Hindāl Mīrzā, ruling in Kunduz, had treacherously offered to turn over the latter town to Sulaymān Mīrzā and that Haram Begam and her son were hurrying thither to assume control. Bāyazīd Bīyāt states unambiguously that it was Bibī Fāṭima who discovered the intentions of the Badakhshanīs, and when she made these known to her fellow-members of the mission (which numbered some 80 men), all of them urged *Khwāja* Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud to seize the Badakhshanīs and carry Ibrāhīm Mīrzā off to Kabul. But the envoy adamantly refused—Bāyazīd thought him a coward—but it was not to be supposed that an ambassador would attempt the kidnapping of the son of the ruler to whom his mission was accredited. Hence Haram Begam and Ibrāhīm Mīrzā proceeded on their way to Kunduz, presumably believing that the true purpose of their journey was still concealed, having assured the envoy that his business would be attended to once they returned from Kunduz. With that, *Khwāja* Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud, Bibī Fāṭima, and the rest of the mission moved on to Kishm, where they found Sulaymān Mīrzā. According to Abu'l Faḍl, who wrote long afterwards and who either knew nothing of or preferred to omit the

unpleasant aspects of this embassy, "Mīrzā Sulaymān recognized the coming of the envoys as a distinction and neglected nothing that could do them honour. In obedience to the royal order, he sent off 'Askarī Mīrzā towards Balkh."<sup>59</sup> Abu'l Faḍl commented:

Mīrzā Sulaymān agreed that the marriage with His Majesty Jahanbani [Humāyūn] should take place on the arrival of the begams (of Humāyūn's court) and the nobles, and on his daughter's becoming older: and he respectfully dismissed the embassy with letters full of apology and submission.<sup>60</sup>

No doubt, the substance of these words was true enough, but they effectively conceal what really happened at Kishm. In fact, no progress was made in the negotiations until Haram Begam returned, having left Ibrāhīm Mīrzā in charge at Kunduz. Meanwhile, the mission had been provided with living quarters in a garden in or on the edge of Kishm, but there was an indefinable sense of menace in the air. Khwāja Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud sensed danger. On one pretext or another, the size of his entourage was reduced to a mere 20; parties of men from the town assembled near the embassy garden at night, acting in an intimidating manner; and a month or more passed without any progress in negotiations. Fearing that his life, or at least his liberty, was threatened, Khwāja Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud sent Bāyazīd Bīyāt to Sulaymān Mīrzā to try to clarify the situation, but the Mīrzā denied all knowledge of what the envoy judged to be hostile incidents. Indeed, he swore on the Qur'ān that he was faithful to Humāyūn and intended no harm.<sup>61</sup> It is probable that the prevarication originated with Haram Begam, who seems to have chafed at her husband's willing subordination to Humāyūn. (In addition to his Tīmūrid and Čaghatāyid ancestry, Sulaymān Mīrzā, as ruler of Badakhshan, was supposedly descended from a line of kings reaching back to Sikandar Dhū'l-Qarnayn, i.e., Alexander the Great himself). It is also possible that she had come to learn of the violence proposed towards her and her son during the encounter at Qala Anghan.

The month of Ramadān 957 (November 1550) was approaching. Perhaps anticipating further delay in his return to Kabul as a result of the onset of winter, Khwāja Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud now appealed to Haram Begam either to settle the business once and for all or to let them go, for he must have realized that nothing would be accomplished at court without her approbation. It now transpired

that she was mortified regarding the gifts brought from Kabul. "The bazaar clothes," she said contemptuously, she could accept for herself, but for her daughter she expected the emperor's own garments (i.e., either a *khil'at*, a robe of honor, belonging to the *pādshāh* himself or belonging to one of his close female relations; or, perhaps less likely, *ṭirāz* robes made in the imperial *kārkhāna*, which indeed may not have existed in those troubled times).<sup>62</sup> She also complained that, if Humāyūn sincerely wished to marry her daughter, he should have sent more prestigious negotiators. She mentioned specifically *Khwāja Dūst Khwand madārchi*, formerly one of Bābur's companions-at-arms and a senior *beg* of Humāyūn's, and Mīr Ṣayyid Birka Tirmīzī, one of the Ṣayyids of Tirmīz. *Khwāja Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud* replied that Humāyūn had chosen him because of his familiarity with the *pādshāh's* affairs, but he assured her that if she preferred other negotiators, it would be a simple matter for him to leave and for others to be sent in his stead. To Bībī Fāṭima, Haram Begam was even more direct:

His Majesty has appointed you in Kabul to seduce the daughters of others. Do you consider my daughter to be of the same type? Why did not some of the Begams or Agachis come?<sup>63</sup> If my daughter has no name, His Majesty's name is very great. When people like you come to ask the hand of my daughter, how may I have given her away in marriage?

To this insult, Bībī Fāṭima replied, "Let me go, and then which Begams you desire they will come."<sup>64</sup> Haram Begam's hostility towards Bībī Fāṭima may have resulted from her discovering that it was Bībī Fāṭima in Qala Anghan who had found out about the Kunduz intrigue, but it would be interesting to know whether her slanderous allusions to Bībī Fāṭima as a procuress related specifically to her reputation at Humāyūn's court, or whether it was generally assumed that this was a common activity of *ūrdūbegīs*.

Bāyazīd, an eye-witness to many of the mission's misfortunes but not, presumably, to the meeting of the two women, records that the Begam later apologized both to the envoy and to Bībī Fāṭima, and gave them rich gifts: she may have realized that she had gone too far and that her words would be repeated to Humāyūn.<sup>65</sup> But there could be no doubt about the failure of the mission. *Khwāja Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud* had already sent ahead his baggage in the care of some merchants bound for Kabul, perhaps anticipating its confiscation. In

the end, his departure was sudden and apparently surreptitious. Bāyazīd says that on the way back to Kabul the envoy ate his food from a kettle and slept under a horse-blanket. The mission may have fled before they could be detained. The winter weather and road conditions between Badakhshan and Kabul would have been atrocious and, travelling so light, it is inconceivable that Bibī Fāṭima had a palanquin: she was surely an accomplished horse-woman.<sup>66</sup>

Once back in Kabul, the humiliated envoys reported to Humāyūn the outcome of their mission and delivered letters from both Sulaymān Mīrzā and Haram Begam. The former had more or less handed the matter over to his wife who, with characteristic truculence, insisted that Humāyūn in person and his entourage should appear in Badakhshan with a show of strength. Here was another and perhaps the principal reason for her hostility towards the late mission: she wanted the Kabul *darbār* to treat the marriage as an occasion for a demonstration of force which would be noticed by the hostile Uzbeks in Balkh. In the end, the marriage between her daughter and Humāyūn never took place.

Bibī Fāṭima's future career is a matter of surmise. She must have gone to India with Humāyūn and, following his death (962/1555), held a position of prominence in Akbar's zenana. Badā'ūnī, invariably hostile to those intimate with Akbar, in describing the events of the year 969/1561–62, mentions a woman named Fāṭima, who was clearly close to the *pādshāh* and is perhaps to be identified with the *urdūbegī* Bibī Fāṭima. As Badā'ūnī tells it, Akbar decided to form marriage alliances with some of the old Muslim families of Delhi and sent eunuchs into their zenanas to report on suitable daughters. This course was allegedly suggested to Akbar by a certain Fāṭima, a widow who was allegedly the mistress of Muḥammad Bāqī *Khān*, a son of Akbar's wet-nurse, Māham Ānkā. Fāṭima introduced the *pādshāh* to a beautiful woman distantly related to her by marriage and Akbar forced the latter's husband to divorce her so that she could be taken into the imperial zenana. Since Badā'ūnī follows this anecdote with a description of the attempted assassination of the *pādshāh*, the reader is led to assume that Akbar's lust for women provoked widespread resentment.<sup>67</sup> It does not, of course, follow that this was the same Bibī Fāṭima, but her close ties with the imperial family and her procuring activities echo Haram Begam's earlier accusations of Bibī Fāṭima as Humāyūn's procuress.



Other sources tell of Bībī Fāṭima's having two children, a daughter, Zahrā', and a son, Raushan Beg Kōka. Zahrā' was married to a very prominent Mughal nobleman, Khwāja Mu'azzam, half-brother to Humāyūn's wife, Hamīda Bānū Begam, and thus Akbar's maternal uncle.<sup>68</sup> In fact, in 949/1542, when Humāyūn, fleeing his enemies, was forced to abandon the new-born Akbar at Amarkot, the baby was handed over to the safe-keeping of Khwāja Mu'azzam. As the years passed, the latter developed a reputation for pathological brutality and violence, and was eventually to die insane. In 971-72/1564, Bībī Fāṭima, now perhaps having become (since the death of Māham Ānkā in 970/1563) superintendent of the zenana in addition to being head *urdūbegī*, was convinced that her daughter (presumably a longtime victim of domestic violence) was in imminent danger of her life. She went to Akbar in Agra and told him that, because Khwāja Mu'azzam feared to kill his wife in the proximity of the *pādshāh's* court, he planned to take her to his *jagīr* and there make away with her. Pitying his old servant, Akbar, who was about to go hunting, said that he would cross the river Jumna on his way and call at the Khwāja's house to tell him to mind his ways and to forbid him taking his wife to his *jagīr*. Learning of the approach of the imperial servants to announce Akbar's arrival, the madman stabbed his wife as she was dressing after her bath and then flung the bloody dagger at the intruders. At the moment of Akbar's arrival, Khwāja Mu'azzam himself had his hand on his sword-hilt and one of his cronies seemed about to attack the *pādshāh*. The latter was instantly decapitated. Khwāja Mu'azzam, still raving and blaspheming, was dragged into the Jumna, but his strength was such that they could not drown him, although his boon-companions, tied hand and foot, quickly sank. Hauled ashore again, he was taken to the state-prison on the rock of Gwalior, and there died completely insane.<sup>69</sup> One source records that Akbar personally broke the news of her daughter's death to Bībī Fāṭima, who approved of what the *pādshāh* had done.

Gulbadan Begam describes Bībī Fāṭima as the mother of Raushan Beg Kōka, and Jawhar records the fact that his mother had been Humāyūn's wet-nurse.<sup>70</sup> In the years that followed, Raushan Beg became a close companion of Humāyūn and shared his early adventures. He was one of the small band of followers who fled with Humāyūn through Panjab and Sind, holding the office of *tūshak begī*, or wardrobe-keeper.<sup>71</sup> He features in Jauhar's chronicle,

rounding up cattle and buffalos to provide inflated skin-rafts for crossing the Indus,<sup>72</sup> warning the emperor of the impending desertions of his *begs*, disputing over the possession of a horse with Hamīda Bānū Begam,<sup>73</sup> and crossing blades with a *beg* of Shāh Ḥusayn Arghūn.<sup>74</sup> On the road into Baluchistan, he rounded up guides and camels, and he remained with Humāyūn on the journey into Persia, where Humāyūn was at first cordially received by Shāh Ṭahmāsp (930–84/1524–76). In course of time, however, Ṭahmāsp's attitude changed and Humāyūn seems to have felt himself a hostage. The sources describing this stay in Persia are contradictory, but it seems that Raūshan Beg and some of his companions, perhaps seduced by the agents of Kāmṛān Mīrzā, became alienated from Humāyūn. In the case of Raūshan Beg, he had been put in charge of such valuables as the fugitives still possessed, and he was now accused of embezzlement.

The conspirators went to Ṭahmāsp with complaints against Humāyūn, claiming that Humāyūn had lost his throne because of his treatment of his brothers and asserting that if the Shāh would imprison him and provide them with some troops, they would easily capture Kandahar and hand it over to him.<sup>75</sup> At first, Ṭahmāsp seemed impressed, but subsequently, he made a volte-face and was reconciled with Humāyūn, apparently believing that he was the most likely person to restore Kandahar to Persia and perhaps choosing to believe in Humāyūn's professed leanings toward Shī'ism. The two rulers were now publicly reconciled during a formal hunt near Takhti Sulayman. Here, the plotters were arrested by the Shāh, denounced to Humāyūn, and then thrown down dry wells to starve to death beneath the Takht. Apparently, Raūshan Beg managed to send a letter to Humāyūn, imploring him in the name of his mother, Bībī Fāṭima, whose milk they had shared, to save him. Humāyūn, on most occasions relatively humane in a brutal age, interceded with Ṭahmāsp to have him spared, which the Shāh agreed to, no doubt confirmed in his conviction of Humāyūn's fundamentally weak nature.<sup>76</sup> Raūshan Beg, restored to his office of *tūshuk begī*, accompanied Humāyūn to Kandahar, and is later mentioned as being sent to Kāmṛān Mīrzā to secure his surrender, which he failed to do.<sup>77</sup> Thereafter, he disappears from sight, although Bāyazīd mentions that when Humāyūn later pursued Kāmṛān Mīrzā north of the Hindukush, Raūshan Beg's brother, Faṭḥ-Allāh, on one

occasion led a scouting party against the foe, accompanied by Bāyazīd himself.<sup>78</sup> Of Faṭḥ-Allāh, nothing further is known, and Raūshan Beg appears to fade out of the picture, a perhaps not untypical *kōka*, spoiled and truculent.

There is, however, a final hypothetical footnote to his story. His name is rather uncommon in the Mughal chronicles of the sixteenth century, but there is mention around 989/1581 of a certain Raūshan Beg, a servant of Akbar's brother, Muḥammad Hakīm Mīrẓā of Kabul, being despatched from there to Bengal, presumably to undertake some intrigue. Orders were sent by Akbar to the *ṣūbahdār* [governor] of Bengal, Muẓaffar Khān, to put him to death and send his head to Akbar.<sup>79</sup> Was he Bibī Fāṭima's son? If so, he would have been quite elderly. He is described as having sought sanctuary among the Qāqshāls, a turbulent Čaghātāyid clan with extensive *jagirs* in eastern India. A disaffected group, they were perhaps natural associates for an intriguer or a refugee, but it is possible that Raūshan Beg was himself a Qāqshāl, and that either Bibī Fāṭima or her nameless husband or both belonged to this clan, a hypothesis the more likely in that the Qāqshāls were much favored by Humāyūn, although not by Akbar.<sup>80</sup>

We know as much about Bibī Fāṭima as we are likely to know about any non-royal member of the Mughal zenana. A Čaghātāyid Turk in all probability, a wet-nurse promoted to chief *ūrdūbegī*, entrusted with matters of security and diplomacy, and perhaps other less reputable assignments, she was a respected court figure whose children were intimate with the imperial family and even married into it. In some sense, Bibī Fāṭima's tale is an unusual but perhaps not untypical success-story.

#### ŪRDŪBĒGIS IN LATER TIMES

How were the *ūrdūbegīs* and their staff dressed? Certainly, there exist among the thousands of surviving Indian drawings and paintings dating from before the nineteenth century illustrations of these women (see figure 3). Probably they wore modified women's clothing to enable them to pursue their avocation, and they may have been dressed in male attire. As is well-known, Raḍiyya bint Iltutmīsh (634–37/1236–40) was criticized by contemporaries for wearing men's clothing.<sup>81</sup> Three centuries later, Gulbadan Begam refers to two granddaughters of Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayqara of Herat



Figure 3: An ūrdūbegī or armed female guard of the Mughal zenana (seventeenth century). Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

(875–912/1470–1508), *Shād Begam* and *Mihr-angez Begam*, among the women of *Humāyūn*'s entourage who wore men's clothes and whose hobbies included making thumb-rings (for bows) and arrows, and playing polo and archery.<sup>82</sup> Later *Mughal* miniatures include many representations of women in men's clothing, playing polo, shooting tigers or lions, or going to war (see figure 4). One may surmise that women whose prime function was to act as guards probably wore some kind of dress which an observer would regard as a uniform.

During the eighteenth century, as a consequence of Indian princes encountering *sepoys* in the service of the East India Companies trained and armed in the European style, some indigenous rulers raised their own European-style military units, of which the most celebrated were the French-officered brigades of *Mahadji Shinde*, cantoned in *Aligarh*. But other princes too either had their own units or, as in the case of the *Awadh* and *Hyderabad* rulers, were familiar with East India Company *sepoys* through the subsidiary forces imposed upon them by treaty. In any case, it seems to have proved a short step from observing Indian *sepoys* in European uniforms to converting the *zenana* guards into female *sepoys* similarly attired. By the close of the eighteenth century, the reigning *Nizām* of *Hyderabad*, *Nizām 'Alī* (1175–1217/1762–1802), had a corps of female *sepoys*, primarily for guarding the women's quarters of the palace and for escorting members of the *zenana* when travelling. An account, dating from 1815, states:

The late *Nizam* had two battalions of female *Sepoys* of one thousand each, which mounted guard in the interior of the palace, and accompanied the ladies of his family whenever they moved. They were with the *Nizām* during the war with the *Mahrattas* in 1795, and were present at the *Battle of Kurdlah* [*Kharda*], where, at least, they did not behave worse than the rest of the army. One of these battalions was commanded by *Mama Burrun*, and the other by *Mama Chumbebee*, two of the principal female attendants of the *Nizam*'s family. The present *Nizam* [*Sikandar Jāh*] still keeps up a reduced establishment of those women; and *Moneer-ool Moolk* [*Munīr al-Mulk*, the *Nizām*'s *vazīr*] has also a party of them. They are dressed as our *Sepoys* formerly used to be, and carry musquets; and they do the French exercise with tolerable correctness. They are called *Zuffer Putuns*, the victorious battalions, and the women composing them



Figure 4: *A Huntress*. Deccani School. 18th century. The superscription reads "dukhtar-i farrukh siyar" [daughter of Farrukh-siyar], Mughal pādshāh (1124–31/1713–1719). Collection of Ismail Merchant.

are called *Gardunees*, a corruption of our word guard. Their pay is five rupees a month.<sup>83</sup>

In 1817, Sir John Malcolm, in a reception in Hyderabad at the palace of Munīr al-Mulk, was "saluted at one part by a guard of female Sepoys. I inquired if the Nizām still had any of this class of troops? Only five hundred was the answer; and these, said Mooneer ool-Moolk, have lost that reputation they formerly enjoyed."<sup>84</sup> In eighteenth-century India, it was not unknown for women to serve in the field or to command units. Heema Bai was the daughter of a minor queen of Jaswant Rao Holkar (d. 1811). Widow of a governor of the country south of Dhar and the holder of a *jāgīr* near Petlawad, she led her troops into battle with sword and lance, and to the surprise of a contemporary Englishman, rode *a la fourchette*, and not side-saddle.<sup>85</sup> The Begam Sāmṛū of Sardhana, widow of the German adventurer, Walther Reinhard, did the same, as well as the celebrated Lakshmi Bai, Rānī of Jhansi (d. 1858), and it sometimes happened that widows of military commanders killed in battle were given charge of their late husbands' units. In this context, a strange tale is told of the Hyderabad *darbār* towards the close of the eighteenth century:

Some time ago a female adventurer, we believe an Italian, came to Hydrabad [*sic*], and, after a little stay, so far ingratiated herself into the Nizam's favour, that he honoured her with several marks of distinction, and at length gave her a title equivalent, perhaps, to a red ribband, and a battalion: her principal recommendation had been dancing elegantly, but she now surprised his Highness by performing the manual exercise in a superior stile, and at last was complimented with an elephant, and lived a considerable time in this state of elevation. Not long since a foreigner, of the name of Florentine, arrived at Hydrabad, and had some employment under government, and being also reputed a great dancer, the Nizām expressed a wish to see the dances of Europe performed by this gentleman and the female colonel; but the lady would submit to no such degradation, and pleaded her station in the army as an insurmountable objection. She acknowledged, that when the light of his Highness's notice first dawning on her obscurity illumined her prospects, she had danced in his presence; but now, from the meridional beams of his favour, she was exalted to the dignity of a command, she would not think of eclipsing the brightness of her station, by submitting to so inferior a practice. This fine speech would not do; the Nizām insisted, she refused, resigned her command, and went to Poona.<sup>86</sup>

The case of Awadh was very similar. In 1828, the intrepid English traveller Fanny Parks received a letter from a lady in Lucknow who had been invited into the zenana of the King of Awadh, Nāṣir al-Dīn Ḥaydar (1243–53/1827–37). Her correspondent wrote:

It was a most amusing sight, as I had never witnessed the interior of a zenana before, and so many women assembled at once I had never beheld. I suppose from first to last we saw some thousands. *Women-bearers* carried our tanjans; a regiment of female gold and silver-sticks, dressed in male costume, were drawn up before the entrance; and those men, chiefly *Africans*, who were employed inside the zenana (and there were abundance of these frightful creatures), were all of the same class as the celebrated Velluti [i.e., eunuchs].<sup>87</sup>

The “gold and silver-sticks” in masculine attire were, presumably, superior ushers (i.e., *ūrdūbegīs*) who were part of the corps of guards responsible for the security of the zenana. In that curious work, *The Private Life of an Eastern King*, relating to the same reign, these Awadh zenana guards are described in greater detail:

Of the living curiosities of the palace there were none the account of which will appear more strange to European ears than the female sepoy. I had seen these men-like women pacing up and down before the various entrances to the female apartments for many days before I was informed of their real character. I regarded them simply as a diminutive race of soldiers, with well-wadded coats. There was nothing but their height and this fulness of the chest to distinguish many of them from other sepoy; and one is so accustomed to see soldiers in England with coats stuffed to make their wearers resemble pouter pigeons, that I took little heed of the circumstance.

These women retained their long hair, which they tied up in a knot upon the top of the head, and there it was concealed by the usual shako. They bore the ordinary accoutrements of sepoy in India—a musket and bayonet, cross-belts and cartridge-boxes, jackets, and white duck continuations, which might be seen anywhere in Bengal. Intended solely for duty in the palace as guardians of the harem, they were paraded only in the court-yards, where I have seen them going through their exercise just like other sepoy. They were drilled by one of the native officers of the king’s army, and appeared quite familiar with marching and wheeling, with presenting, loading, and firing muskets, with the fixing and unfixing of bayonets—in fact, with all the ordinary detail of the barrack-yard. Whether they could have gone through the same manoeuvres in the field with thousands of moustachoed sepoy around them, I cannot tell—probably not.



They had their own corporals and sergeants; none of them, I believe, attained a higher rank than that of sergeant. Many of them were married women, obliged to quit the ranks for a month or two at a time occasionally. They retained their places, however, as long as possible; and it was not until the fact of their being women was pointed out to me, that I perceived their figures were not always in the proportions allotted to the other sex. Their appearance was a frequent subject of merriment with the king, who usually ended his *badinage* of them, however, by ordering some present to be given to the delinquent. Of these female sepoyes there were in all two companies, of the usual strength, or weakness, if the reader will have it so. Once during my residence at Lucknow they were employed by the king against his own mother... [having ordered the queen-mother to leave the palace], the king then sent his female sepoyes to turn her out; but her retainers fought with and routed them. The balls firing on either side were whistling over my house at the time. Fifteen or sixteen of the Begam's attendants were killed in this attack.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, in an undignified scuffle between the female retainers of the king of Awadh, and those of his mother, we may take leave of the once proud *ūrdūbegīs*, who had guarded the kinswomen of Bābur and Humāyūn on their descent into the Indian plains and had accompanied the entourage of Raus̄hanārā Begam through the streets of Delhi. It is, however, possible that, even after the East India Company's demise in 1858, there still survived in some of the princely courts vestiges of an institution which reached back to the armed women whom Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador in the third century B.C., observed accompanying Chandragupta Maurya on his hunting expeditions and who, at night, according to Kautilya, guarded the Mauryan emperor's bedchamber.<sup>89</sup>

#### ABBREVIATIONS

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| AA (Per.) | Abu'l-Faḍl 'Allāmī, <i>Ā'in-i Akbarī</i> . Edited by H. Blochmann. 2 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1877.                           |
| AA (Eng.) | Abu'l-Faḍl 'Allāmī, <i>Ā'in-i Akbarī</i> . Translated by H. Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927–1948. |
| AN        | Abu'l-Faḍl 'Allāmī, <i>Akbar-nama</i> . Translated by H. Beveridge. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1897–1921.                     |

- BN 'Abd al-Hamid Lāhawrī, *Pādshāh-nama*. Edited by Kabir al-Dīn Aḥmad and 'Abd al-Rahim. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867–1872.
- DTO M. Pavet de Courteille, *Dictionnaire Turk-Oriental*. Paris: L'Imprimerie Impériale, 1870.
- DUH John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1884.
- EI *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960–.
- EIRAN *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982–.
- GI Muḥammad Qāsim Firīshṭa, *Gulshān-i Ibrāhīmī*, translated by John Briggs as *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*, 4 vols., Calcutta, 1829; reprinted Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1966.
- HN Gulbadan, Begam, *Humāyūn-nāma*. Edited and translated by A. S. Beveridge. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902.
- LT Gunnar Jarring, *Literary Texts from Kashghar*. Lund: C.V.K. Gleerup, 1980.
- MT (Per.) 'Abd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh*. Edited by Maulvi Aḥmad 'Alī. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1864–69.
- MT (Eng.) 'Abd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh*. Translated by G.S.A. Ranking, W.H. Lowe, and T.W. Haig, 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1899–1925.
- PD F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977.
- SJN 'Ināyat Khān, *Shāhjahān-nāma*. Edited and translated by W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- TA Khwāja Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad, *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*. Translated by B. De. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911–39.
- THA (Per.) Bāyazīd Bīyāt, *Tadhkira-yi Humāyūn wa Akbar*. Edited by M. Hidayat Hosain. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1941.
- THA (Eng.) Bāyazīd Bīyāt, *Tadhkira-yi Humāyūn wa Akbar*. Translated by B.P. Saksena. Allahabad University Studies 6 (I), 1930, pp. 71–148.
- TI François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656–1668*. Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1891.
- TJ Jahāngīr, *Tuzūk-i Jahāngīrī*. Translated by A. Rogers and H. Beveridge. 2 vols. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1909–1914.
- TME Gerard Doefer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*. 4 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz, 1963–1975.
- TSH Otto Spies, "Turkisches Sprachgut im Hindustani," in *Studia Indologica: Festschrift für Willibald Kirfel*. Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1955, pp. 321–343.
- TW Jawhar Āftābī, *Tadhkirat al-Wāqī'at*. Translated by Charles Stewart. (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1832.)

## NOTES

1. What can be achieved, however, by impeccable research can be seen in Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). It is sometimes forgotten that the traditional harem has survived in some parts of the Muslim world well into the twentieth century. For Persia see, for example: Tāj al-Saltana, *Crowning Anguish: Memoirs of a Persian Princess from the Harem to Modernity, 1884–1914*, ed. Abbas Amanat (Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1993); Sattareh Farmān Farmaian, *Daughter of Persia* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1992); and Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of a Persian Prince* (New York: Random House, 1977).

2. The quintessential European idea of the harem is to be found in the writings of James Justinian Morier (1780?–1849), born and bred in Ottoman Smyrna (now Izmir) and later secretary to British diplomatic missions to Tehran. See, for example, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824), *Zohrab the Hostage* (1832), and *Aysha, the Maid of Kars* (1834). Or consider the titillating settings for Mozart's *Entführung aus dem Serail* or Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*.

3. Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: the Topkapı in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York: The Architectural History Foundation, Inc., 1991), p. 182.

4. This and the previous quotation are from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, pp. 182–83.

5. E. Quatremère, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1842), vol. 2, pp. 46–47.

6. L.A. Mayer, *Mamlūk Costume* (Geneva: Albert Kundig, 1952), p. 71; Quatremère, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks*, vol. 1, pp. 71, 77.

7. Mayer, *Mamlūk Costume*, pp. 13, 16, and 17.

8. Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sūluk*, ed. M.M. Ziyada and S.A.F. Ashour, 4 vols., (Cairo, 1934–72), vol. 2, pp. 678–79. The translation is by D. Ayalon, "The Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977), p. 284. See also H.A.R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, AD 1325–1354* (Cambridge, Eng.: Hakluyt Society, 1962), vol. 2, pp. 480–81 and 485–59.

9. AA (Per.), vol. 1, p. 30; AA (Eng.), vol. 1, p. 46.

10. Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor, or Mogul India, 1653–1708*, tr. William Irvine, 4 vols. (London, 1907; rpt. Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1966) vol. 2, p. 308.

11. SJN, p. 572.

12. TJ, vol. 2, pp. 117–18; E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1928) vol. 4, pp. 253–56.

13. BN(1), p. 403

14. BN (1), p. 629.

15. BN(1), pp. 452–60, for an account of the wedding, and especially p. 453.

16. BN(1), part 2, p. 70.

17. TA(3), p. 1006; TJ(1), p. 46. For *kōka* [foster-brother or foster-sister], see DTO, p. 473; TME(2), p. 482; and TSH, p. 339.

18. AA (Eng.), vol. 1, p. 574.

19. This is exemplified by the episode in which Akbar was taking his afternoon rest in the zenana, when his foster-brother, Adham *Khān*, having just murdered the *vakīl*, Atka *Khān*, tried to force his way into the zenana, only to find his way blocked by a faithful eunuch who barred the door. AN (Eng.), vol. 2, pp. 268–72.

20. For the *Mughal* seals, and particularly the circular imperial seal known as *uzuk*, see AA (Per.), vol. 1, p. 38/ AA (Eng.), vol. 1, p. 54, and A.D. Khan, *Diplomatics of the Soyurghal Farmān of the Great Mughals (1556–1707)* (Allahabad: Quemer Publications, 1994), pp. 52–59 and 73–77. For *uzuk* or *üzük* (?), see TME(1), pp. 146–147, and PD, p. 120. According to ‘Ināyat *Khān*, the standard procedure regarding the authentication of *farmans* during *Shāh Jahān*’s reign was for a *farmān* to be drawn up, submitted to the *pādshāh* for approval, and notarized by the *sāhib-i risālat* [head of the secretariat] and the *dīwān-i kull* [the principal *vazīr*]. Thus, “[t]he orders, which are as binding as destiny, are then sent to the sacred seraglio to be ornamented with the exalted royal seal, which is in the keeping of Her Majesty the Queen, Mumtāz al-Zamānī” SJN, p. 570. After Mumtāz Maḥall’s death, the seal was handed to *Shāh Jahān*’s eldest daughter, Jahānārā Begam. SJN, p. 74. Bernier recalled that when Awrangzīb fell ill (perhaps in 1662), his younger sister, Raushanārā Begam, was given what the Frenchman referred to as “the Great Seal,” presumably the *uzuk*. François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire. AD 1656–1668* (London: Archibald Constable and Company, 1891), p. 125. It may be supposed that this practice was due not to the *pādshāh*’s desire to involve the imperial women in the governance of the empire but to an incorrigible distrust of his male entourage.

21. AA (Per.), vol. 1, p. 30/ AA (Eng.), vol. 1, pp. 46–47. Although this paper is concerned with the zenanas of Indo-Muslim rulers, much of what is written here would apply *mutatis mutandis* to Hindu rajās, such as the ruler of the Vijayanagar empire (1336–1565), of whom Fernao Nuniz wrote:

He has five hundred wives and as many less or more as he wants, with whom he sleeps; and all of these burn themselves at his death.

In his palace within the gates he is served by women and eunuchs and servants numbering fully five or six hundred; and these wives of the King all have their own officials for their service, each for herself, just as the King has within the gates, but these all are women. This King has also within his gates more than four thousand women, all of whom lie in the palace; some are dancing-girls, and others are bearers who carry the King’s wives on their

shoulders, and the King also in the interior of the palace.... He has also women who wrestle, and others who are astrologers and soothsayers; and he has women who write all the accounts of expenses that are incurred inside the gates, and others whose duty it is to write all the affairs of the kingdom and compare their books with those of the writers outside; he has women also for music, who play instruments and sing. Even the wives of the King are well versed in music.

Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Kingdom (Vijayanagar): A Contribution to the History of India* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd., 1900), pp. 270–71 and 382. In an interesting footnote relating to the King's bearers, Sewell writes: "Bois. Hindu women of the Boyi caste. The Boyis are Telugus, and are employed as bearers of palanqueens and other domestic service in Southern India. Hence the Anglo-Indian term 'Boy' for a servant."

22. Outside the Indian sub-continent, the notion of a Muslim ruler being guarded by non-Muslim troops might seem odd. The presence of Rajputs around the imperial tent symbolizes the extent of the Mughal-Rajput alliance initiated during Akbar's reign.

The role of eunuchs in the social history of Islam has received comparatively little attention, apart from an important study of the eunuchs of the *haramayn*. See Shaun Marmon, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). See also David Ayalon, "The Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 267–95; "On the Eunuchs in Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979): 67–124; and "On the term *khadim* in the sense of 'eunuch' in the early Islamic sources," *Arabica* 32 (1985): 289–308. For brief notices of eunuchs in Muslim India, see Gavin Hambly, "A Note on the Trade in Eunuchs in Mughal Bengal," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94 (1974): 125–129, and R. Nath, "The Mughal Institution of Khwajasara," in *Medieval Indian History and Architecture* (New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 1995), pp. 13–22.

23. For Ghiyāth Shāh, see U.N. Day, *Medieval Malwa: A Political and Cultural History, 1401–1562* (New Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1965), pp. 220–48.

24. TA(3), pp. 544 and 550, including an anecdote relating to the sultan's kidnapping proclivities.

25. TA(3), p. 545.

26. TA(3), p. 547.

27. TA(3), p. 545. The *ṭanka* was a coin of high value, usually silver but occasionally gold. As a measurement of weight in India, the *man* has varied enormously according to time and place. No estimate can be made of the weight of a *man* in Ghāyāth Shāh's reign. See Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, new edn., by W. Crooke (London: John Murray, 1903), pp. 563–65 and 896–98.

28. GI (Per.), vol. 1, pp. 308–09; GI (Eng.), vol. 2, pp. 227–28. I am indebted to the Library of Congress for loaning me a microfilm of the Lucknow lithographed text. I have modified Briggs's spelling of the various races of women in the sultan's harem. This catalogue may indicate contemporary taste in female beauty rather than an accurate inventory of Fīrūz Shāh's zenana. For a recent and more accurate translation of this passage, see George Michell and Richard Eaton, *Firuzabad: Palace City of the Deccan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 10.

29. Michell and Eaton, p. 11.

30. Michell and Eaton, p. 11.

31. E.C. Bayley, *The Local Muhammadan Dynasties: Gujarat* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1886), p. 366.

32. TA(3), p. 545.

33. GI (Per.) / GI (Eng.), vol. 4, p. 143. The reference to firearms may be anachronistic, but see Yar Muhammad Khan: *El(1)*, s.v. "Bārūd," pp. 1068–69.

34. See n. 21.

35. Bernier, p. 372. Other Europeans commented on these armed female attendants, e.g., Fernao Nuniz on the ruler of Vijayanagar: "It is said that he has judges, as well as bailiffs and watchmen who every night guard the palace, and all these are women" (Sewell, p. 383). "The King [Jahāngīr] hath every 24 howers a fresh guard both of men and woemen" (William Foster, *The Journal of John Jourdain, 1608–1617* [London: The Hakluyt Society, 1895], p. 163), and again, "His woemen watch within, and guard him with manly weapons (William Foster, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India, 1615–19* [London: The Hakluyt Society, 1926], p. 85.) Of Awrangzīb: "During sleep he is guarded by women slaves, very brave, and highly skilled in the management of the bow and other arms" (Manucci, vol. 2, p. 309).

36. GME(3), p. 506; PD, p. 986.

37. SJN, p. 554.

38. Bernier, p. 61. It would be interesting to trace fictional representations of female harem guards. In Mīr Ammān's *Bagh ō Bahār*, for example, at a party a female guard decapitates the guests whom her mistress despises (Mīr Ammān, *A Tale of Four Dervishes*, trans. Mohammed Zakir [Delhi: Penguin Books, 1994], p. 33).

39. AA (Per.), vol. 1, p. 31/ AA (Eng.), vol. 1, pp. 46–48. THA (Per.) THA (Eng.). TME(2), p. 37. DTO, p. 54; TSH, p. 325; DLJH, p. 39. The word *ordu* can mean a "palace" as well as a "camp." See, e.g., G. Jarring, *Literary Texts from Kashgar* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1980), pp. 47, 51, 110, and 115.

40. As Manucci notes, "very brave, and highly skilled in the management of the bow and other arms" (Manucci, vol. 2, p. 309). Manucci also refers specifically to the absence of veils: "There are also at the doors [of the zenana] women, ordinarily natives of Kashmir, who are

employed to carry away or to bring back anything that may be necessary; these women do not veil themselves to anybody" (Manucci, vol. 2, p. 328).

41. The role of women in the Turko-Mongol social milieu was first explored with regard to the Saljūkids and the Ilkhānids by Ann K.S. Lambton in *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11th–14th Century* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), pp. 258–96. See also, in this volume, the comments of Priscilla Soucek and Kathryn Babayan.

42. Hirananda Shastri, "The 'Hamir-Math,' or the Obstinacy of Hamir, the Chauhan Prince of Ranthambhor." *Journal of Indian Art and Industry* 17 (1916): 35–40 [p. 36]. See also K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis, AD 1290–1320* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1967), pp. 83–97, and especially p. 86, footnote 19.

43. R.C. Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy, in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, 5 vols. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1907–1936), vol. 2, p. 192, and fig. 12, facing p. 192.

44. Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Musselmauns of India: Descriptive of Their Manners, Customs, Habits, and Religious Opinions made during a Twelve Years' Residence in Their Immediate Society*, 2 vols. (London: Parbury, Allen, and Co., 1832), vol. 2, p. 77. Not known by any other name, Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali was an Englishwoman who married an Awadhi nobleman who was visiting London, and returned with him to Lucknow until ill-health led her to retire to England.

45. Hassan Ali, vol. 2, pp. 79–80.

46. William Knighton, *The Private Life of an Eastern King, together with Elibu Jan's Story, or The Private Life of an Eastern Queen*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 134. Regarding this curious work, see Rosie Lewellyn-Jones, "The Barber of Lucknow: George Harris Dernsett," *Asian Affairs* 27 (1996): 62–67.

47. Another possible *ūrdūbegī* belonging to the zenana of Kāmṛān Mīrzā was Tarḫān Bega, who was sent by Kāmṛān Mīrzā to Haram Begam as a procuress. Haram Begam, outraged, had torn her to pieces. HN (Per.), p. 89/ HN (Eng.), p. 193.

48. EI(1), p. 1197.

49. HN (Per.), p. 27 / HN (Eng.), p. 122.

50. DTO, p. 37: *ānākā*, "nourrice; sage-femme; gouvernante." TSH, p. 326.

51. TME(1), p. 481: *kōkaltāsh*; DTO, p. 473: *kōkaltāsh*, "frère de lait." The diminutive used in Mughal India was *kōka/kūka*. There was a comparable pattern with the wet-nurse's husband. See TSH, p. 325: *atka*. DTO, p. 5: *atka, atika*, "précepteur, instituteur, père de lait."

52. THA (Per.), p. 73/THA (Eng.), p. 100.

53. William Erskine, *A History of India Under the Two First Sovereigns of the House of Taimur, Baber and Humāyūn*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1854), vol. 2, pp. 328–33.

54. THA (Per.), p. 73/ THA (Eng.), p. 100. For an account of the career of Bāyazīd Bīyāt., and the contents of his *Tadhkīra-yi Humāyūn va Akbar*, see Henry Beveridge, "The Memoirs of Bāyazīd (Bejazar) Bīyāt.," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1889): 296–316.

55. According to Abu'l Faḍl, "...Qaraca Khan came with a number of loyalists and pitched his tent in the royal courtyard and confined M. 'Askarī who was likely to be seditious, bringing him into his own tent. Qaraca acted as a personal attendant and waited upon his Majesty during his sickness. No one entered the presence except Khwāja Khawand Maḥmud and Khwāja Mu'in." AN(1), pp. 493–94. Khwāja Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad writes much the same. TA(2), p. 108. Jawhar writes that the queen (presumably Māh Čučak Begam) personally nursed the *pādshāh* back to health, while Qarāča Khān maintained security. TW, p. 84. Māh Čučak Begam's origins remain obscure. Annette Beveridge supposed that she was not a woman of noble birth when she married Humāyūn in 953/1546. She was the mother of Muḥammad Hakīm, another boy, and four girls. She subsequently proved an enterprising and active woman, taking over the government of Kabul on behalf of her son, but she was eventually murdered in 971/1564 by an adventurer to whom she had given her daughter in marriage. AN(2), p. 319.

Gulbadan Begam passes over the incident briefly. See HN (Per.) 78/ HN (Eng.), p. 180. None of these accounts mention Bibī Fāṭīma, but they do not therefore exclude the role allotted to her by Bāyazīd Bīyāt. Bāyazīd Bīyāt, Gulbadan Begam, and Jawhar all seemed to have composed their recollections of Humāyūn's reign at more or less the same time. Abu'l Faḍl describes "interrogating the servants of the State and the old members of the illustrious family....The royal commands were issued to the provinces, that those who from old service remembered...the events of the past, should copy out their notes and memoranda and transmit them to the Court." AN(1), pp. 29–30.

56. For Khwāja Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud, see AA (Eng.), vol. 1, p. 417.

57. THA (Per.), p. 137/ THA (Eng.), p. 132; AN(1), p. 575.

58. THA (Per.), p. 137/ THA (Eng.), p. 132. The fiery Haram Begam figures prominently in contemporary sources. She was the daughter of Sulṭān Wais Kūlābī, a Qipčaq Mongol whom Bābur had urged Humāyūn to rely upon for advice. She married Sulaymān Mīrzā, ruler of Badakhshan, and by him had a son, Ibrāhīm Mīrzā, and several daughters. Her pride and ambition seemed to have been stimulated by her marriage into the ancient Badakhshanī ruling house, since there is no record of her own line being of great distinction.

59. AN(1), p. 575.

60. AN(1), p. 575.

61. THA (Per.), pp. 139–140/ THA (Eng.), p. 134.



62. Major Islamic dynasties maintained *kārkhānas* [manufacturing workshops] for the manufacture of *firāz* robes, but it is difficult to imagine the peripatetic court of the early Mughals possessing such an institution.

63. *Aghācha*, a Ćaghatāy Turkish word meaning a woman, in contrast to *Begam* or *Khānūm*, DTO, p. 24. In 19th-century Kashgar, it meant simply a woman or a wife, according to H. Whitaker, *Eastern Turki* (Chaubattia: Regimental Printing Press, 1909) vol. 2, p. 1. Annette Beveridge understood it to mean a lady, but not a *Begam* by birth, and sometimes a concubine. HN, pp. 2, 3, and 91. Here, it must surely mean a woman of high rank.

64. This and the previous quotation are found in THA (Per.), p. 141–42 / THA (Eng.), p. 135.

65. THA (Per.), p. 143. This section is omitted in the English translation.

66. The fact that zenana women rode in public does not necessarily mean that they were unveiled. Peter Mundy, writing of the reign of Shāh Jahān, witnessed a procession of zenana women, including a “woman of the better fashion on Horseback astride, quite covered over from head to foote, with linnen; before her Eyes a Nettinge worke or Grateinge to see through.” Sir Richard Carnac Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy, in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1914), vol. 2, p. 192, and facing plate. Unveiled women in various equestrian pursuits occur frequently in Mughal miniatures. These are not necessarily naturalistic representations but they may reflect contemporary practice in certain circumstances. Bibī Fāṭima may, of course, have been an accomplished camel-woman. Haram Begam surely was: when she was leaving Kabul for Badakhshan around 963–4/1556, the governor, Mun‘im Khān, rode out to honor her departure and she ordered her camel to kneel, so that she could honor him. HN, p. 64.

67. MT, vol. 2, p. 59.

68. It is curious that Abu’l Faḍl omits him from his biographies of imperial *manṣabdārs*, but see AN, vol. 2, pp. 334–35.

69. AN(2), pp. 335–37, TA(2), pp. 287–89; MT(2), p. 71.

70. DTO, p. 72.

71. DTO, p. 234.

72. TW, p. 33.

73. TW, p. 42.

74. TW, pp. 47–49.

75. TW, pp. 68–69.

76. TW, p. 72.

77. TW, pp. 81–82.

78. THA (Per.), pp. 105–06.

79. TA(2), p. 529; MT(2), p. 289.

80. See Iqtidar Alam Khan, *The Political Biography of a Moghal Noble: Munim Khan Khan-i Khanan, 1497-1575* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), pp. xv-xvii.

81. Minhāj-i Sirāj Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, ed. A.H. Habibi, 2 vols. (Kabul: Historical Society of Afghanistan, 1963-64), vol. 1, p. 460; English translation by H. G. Raverty, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1881), vol. 1, p. 643.

82. HN (Per.), p. 32/ HN (Eng.), p. 120.

83. Quoted in Valentine Blacker, *Memoirs of the Operations of the British Army in India, during the Mahratta War of 1817, 1818, & 1819*, 2 vols. (London: Black, Kingsbury, Parbury, & Allen, 1821), vol. 1, note p. 213.

84. J.W. Kaye, *Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir John Malcolm, K.C.B.*, 2 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1856), vol. 2, p. 163.

85. Blacker, p. 212.

86. Edward Moor, *A Narrative of the Operations of Captain Little's Detachment, and of the Mahratta Army, commanded by Purseram Bhow; during the late Confederacy in India, against the Nawab Tippoo Sulṭān Bahadur* (London: George Woodfall, 1794), pp. 117-18.

87. Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, 2 vols. (London: Pelham Richardson, 1850), vol. 1, pp. 87-88. In 1812, James Morier described in similar terms the zenana of Fath 'Ali Shāh (1212/1250-1797/1834), the second Qājār ruler of Persia:

The Harem is most numerous, and contains a female establishment as extensive as the public household. All the officers of the King's court are there represented by females. There are women *feroshes*, and there is a woman *ferosh basher*; women *chatters*, and a woman *chatter basher*; there is a woman *arz begee*, and a woman *ish agassi*; in short, there is a woman duplicate for every male officer; and the King's service in the interior of the *harem* is carried on with the same etiquette and regularity, as the exterior economy of his state.

James Justinian Morier, *A Journey Through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople* (London: Longman, 1812), p. 225.

88. William Knighton, *The Private Life of an Eastern King* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 130-32. See also Safi Aḥmad, *Two Kings of Awadh: Muḥammad Ali Shāh and Amjad Ali Shāh (1837-1847)* (Aligarh: P.C. Dwadash Shreni and Co. (P.) Ltd., 1971), pp. 90-91.

89. R. P. Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthasastra*, 3 parts (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1965-72), part 2, page 51.



PRIVATE LIVES AND PUBLIC PIETY:  
WOMEN AND THE PRACTICE OF ISLAM IN  
MUGHAL INDIA

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*Women of the Mughal dynasty led private lives in the sense that their personalities were hidden from public scrutiny, but the ruling house relied for its spiritual well-being on visible evidence of the piety of its women.*

Often, "...the enormous condescension of posterity"<sup>1</sup> has distorted historical appreciations of women living during the Mughal era in South Asia in one of two opposite but strangely complimentary ways. In the first, women practically disappear from any consideration of Islam's practice in the early modern age. They become veiled spectators and silent victims to a creed completely dominated by males.<sup>2</sup> The second approach has seized upon the few details available about individual women and constructed portraits of prescient feminists such as Nūr Jahān who were willing to defy the strictures of a strictly orthodox, misogynistic faith.<sup>3</sup> While the first caricature ignores them, the inflated hagiographical style of the second diminishes Muslim women of the Mughal period by forcing them into thoroughly modern European or American ideals of womanhood. Neither approach places women, or Islam in terms of its actual practice, in an appropriate historical context.

Nineteenth-century European and American intellectuals contributed to both types of distortion as they began constructing distinctions between the private and public spheres of life. Family relations and home were the private domain. Strangers, particularly governments, had no right to intrude into those intimate realms. Political and commercial life comprised the public arena: a rough world from which males protected the weaker sex.<sup>4</sup> The application

of such notions to the early modern Muslim world, as well as to European and American societies, ignored at least two significant possibilities. The first assumed that only public power mattered, forgetting that women exercised real power over the behavior of males in the private domain. The second assumed that religious power was truly insignificant. Scientifically describable forces such as the emergence of classes or bureaucracies forged politics. All else was fantasy. Whether Marxian or Weberian, social science consigned the rituals and symbolisms of religion to the realm of superstition,<sup>5</sup> in part because women seemed unduly attracted to such things. One consequence of that gullibility was that neither faith nor females could effect the conduct of government.<sup>6</sup>

Mughal dynastic histories were relatively free of misogynist prejudice. Their authors readily acknowledged that women were capable of governing.<sup>7</sup> When Sulṭān Muḥammad of Bengal died in the 1520s, his wife, Dūdū—mother of the heir apparent, Jalāl Khān—took charge of the government of Bihar. Shīr Shāh Sūr, whose rebellion eventually dethroned Bābur's son, Humāyūn, came to power by acting as her chief minister. Harām Begam, the wife of Mīrzā Sulaymān, ruler of Badakhshan in the reign of Akbar, was a wily manipulator of the men who were supposedly the rulers of the age. The chronicle described her as 'foolish,' but that amounted to an admission that she had outsmarted a number of males.<sup>8</sup>

Within the Mughal court, historians noted that women actively participated in factional conflict—as Māham Ānkā and Hamīda Bānū Begam (respectively the wet-nurse and mother of Akbar) did when they actively opposed the dominance of Akbar's *atāliq*, Bayram Khān.<sup>9</sup> Women were sent on diplomatic missions<sup>10</sup> and sought favors for their husbands or near relatives at court.<sup>11</sup> While imperial records concentrated mostly on the deeds of males, such vignettes placed politically astute and influential females close to the ranks of their more prominent masculine contemporaries.

Discussions of Islamic piety among scholars of the Mughal period have yet to penetrate the expected rhetoric of court panegyrists. Women and religion have remained topics buried in subsequent generations' assumptions about a doctrinaire faith.<sup>12</sup> In practice, Islam was probably more diverse before 1857 than modern catechisms of the faith would allow.<sup>13</sup> In the early modern period, belief found expression within a spectrum of piety that involved deeper

commitments to holy persons than to details of theology. Demonstrating affiliations with living saints or making visitations to the tombs of deceased holy men (more rarely, holy women) mattered more in the absence of a single religious hierarchy. Without a centralized curia-like bureaucracy, any generation of Muslims had to turn to living guides or to the countless exemplary tales about dead saints and scholars to find the most appropriate way of being faithful. The great-granddaughters and great-grandsons of women in the Mughal age have tended to forget both the political and religious diversity of that time and place in favor of a method of analysis that concentrated on narrower as well as more rigid categorizations.

Ruling dynasties such as the Ottoman, Şafavid, and Mughal rested their authority, in part, on the assertion of an inherited right to rule. In addition, participation in public events that demonstrated personal Islamic piety: the distribution of alms and visits to the tombs of saints or the building of mosques, temples, and mausolea, formed another crucial element in an elaborate series of political arguments that sought to demonstrate each dynasty's fitness to rule. Women of each of those empires helped in establishing both heredity and public piety as part of practical politics. Women in the Ottoman, Şafavid, and Mughal houses lived in different social and political circumstances, but probably did not see themselves in the same analytical fashion that modern scholars have employed.

For the Mughals, the genealogical argument involved women's contributions in passing on Tīmūr's legacy to succeeding generations. It also required their public association with exemplary religious personalities and involvement in religious institutions as well as rituals. Women's activities in those complimentary realms were fundamental to the Indian Tīmūrids' attempt to construct an enduring polity.

#### ISLAM AND ROYAL WOMEN'S IDENTITIES

Dynastic chronicles and official decrees: *farmāns*, *hukms*, or *parwānas* provide very little information about the personalities of individual women. Those documents supply none of the particulars about temperament or style which modern sensibilities crave. In that sense, the lives of women in the Mughal era were private: not publicly known. With the exceptions of a few revelations in the

autobiographies of Bābur and Jahāngīr, next to nothing about the private lives or personalities of the *pādshāhs* themselves has come down to posterity. Both the males and females of the period were probably much more concerned about presenting themselves as the living copies of a series of exemplary figures.<sup>14</sup> For the Mughal emperors, that was expressed as a claim to be another Solomon or Timūr. Women's models came from the stock of pious figures of Islamic lore: *Khadija* or 'Ā'isha, wives of the Holy Prophet. The name Bilqīs, the wise wife of a wise ruler, Solomon, often appeared in the titles that women bore. Mīrzā Amina Qazwīnī's obituary for Mumtāz Maḥall described her, not as an individual person, but as a list of women whose qualities she had embodied.

...the Lady of heavenly threshold and of sun-like veil—the repository of divine pleasure and mainstay of pardon; the Begam of the honored Begams and the Lady of the ladies of the world; the glory of the daughters of Adam and chief of the women of the Time; the Queen of the ladies of the world and honored Lady associated with Felicity; the epitome of the manners of Rabi'a; the achievements of Maryām, the mind of *Khadija*, the learning of *Asiya*, the glory of *Qaizafa* and the rank of *Bilqīs*—Her Majesty the Queen Mumtāz Maḥall Begam...<sup>15</sup>

Qazwīnī makes no mention of Mumtāz's personal name—much less whether she was witty or somber, what clothes she wore, or how she styled her hair. None of those mattered in comparison to the more significant purpose of demonstrating that she had all the qualities of queens such as *Asiya*, the wife of Pharaoh and a secret Israelite who helped to protect the prophet Mūsā [Moses], as well as of those favored in special ways by God, such as Mary the Mother of 'Isā [Jesus]. Qazwīnī also compared her to the famous mystic Rabi'a, who was renowned for deeds of extraordinary kindness and self-denial.

Every title mentioned by Qazwīnī, therefore, called up a series of images of people and events for anyone who heard Mumtāz compared to those holy women. Because non-Muslims involved in the Mughal court heard the same stories about female saints, the Islamicate resonances crossed seemingly firm doctrinal boundaries. Thus, while Mumtāz's individuality remained hidden, her association with a wide range of well-known saintly exemplars was broadcast rather than muted. *Shāh Jahān's* claim to be the *Ṣāhib-i*

Qirān-i Thānī, 'The Master of the Second Auspicious Conjunction of the Planets,' made him close to Tīmūr, who was the Master of the First Auspicious Conjunction. Mumtāz's identity lent to her consort an aura of sanctity that was very public and probably, at that time, no less significant. Indeed, the mystical symbolism of her tomb, the Tāj Maḥall, was a conspicuous proclamation of her own as well as Shāh Jahān's religiosity.<sup>16</sup>

While the Ottomans attempted to regulate the public titulature of all members of the royal house,<sup>17</sup> the Indian Tīmūrids apparently allowed for greater invention. No strict hierarchy seems to have been explicit in any of the titles that royal women bore. After her death, Akbar's mother was known as Maryām Makānī [having the place/station of Mary]. Jahāngīr referred to his mother as Maryām al-Zamānī [The Mary of the Age]. Titles that identified them with the mother of Jesus went to other consorts, but those sobriquets did not apparently have the same formal weight as the Ottoman's ranking system in which the title *valide sultān* [mother of the sultan] sometimes carried greater significance while in other periods the *haseki*, the 'favorite' concubine [Modern Turkish spelling derived from the Persian *khāṣṣ*], had more importance.

Onomastical differences highlighted a contrast between the relative stability of the Ottoman state and the more precarious political world of the Mughals. Most Ottoman rulers who followed the second Sultān, Orhan, were the sons of slave-concubines. Because women chosen from among non-Muslim slaves had, from the point of view of dynastic succession, no ancestors, only direct male descent from Osman mattered.<sup>18</sup> Daughters of the sultans married state notables in an obvious attempt to secure the loyalty of subordinate, but still important, leaders. More importantly, after the reign of Sulaymān II 'Qānūnī,' families began to congregate in the palaces of Istanbul. Few sultans engaged in long campaigns and they began to cultivate seclusion as a method of inspiring political awe. The ritual peregrinations of Ottoman royal women—particularly of the *valides*, began to compensate for the lack of the triumphal processions that had once marked sultanic victories.

During the more than two hundred years of their effective dominion, Mughal emperors remained mobile and were usually active warriors. The marriage alliances made by the Indian Tīmūrids always shifted in ways different from those made by the Ottomans,



but with a similar concern for dynastic stability. In the reigns of Bābur and Humāyūn, female descendants of Tīmūr, his son Shāh Rukh, and his great-grandson, Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayqara, as well as many of the Čaghatāy Khāns, became wives of Bābur or of his sons. Indeed, any woman who could claim to be a distant cousin in the Tīmūrid line received a welcome in Bābur's and Humāyūn's court.<sup>19</sup> Though they may have been aged widows, divorcees, or spinsters and therefore uninvolved in the biological compulsions of dynastic succession, their mere presence contributed to the status of the ruler's lineage affirming his unique ability to rule as well as conquer Hindustan.

During his rise to power, Tīmūr's court propagandists tried to establish a lineage that placed his family in close biological proximity to that of Čingiz Khān. In a more practical fashion, Tīmūr and his sons frequently married Čaghatāyid princesses.<sup>20</sup> Bābur and Humāyūn had a similar regard for descendants of Čingiz. They sometimes married Čaghatāy women and welcomed others to their court with the same enthusiasm shown to females having impeccable Tīmūrid ancestry.

As Akbar began conquering the non-Muslim princes of Rajasthan, the daughters of defeated rajas became Akbar's wives; some, the mothers of his children. Rajput women became wives to Tīmūrid princes and notables for the next two centuries. Those Hindu princesses received and themselves employed honorifics that had Perso-Islamic connotations. Jahāngīr referred to his mother, the daughter of Raja Beharī Mal Kachhwaha, as Maryām al-Zamānī [The Mary of the Age]. In her own decrees, she employed the title Walī Ni'mat Begam, which implied that she was a 'Lady of Beneficence.'<sup>21</sup> The notion that a royal woman was a source of sustenance or wealth for the notables and subjects of the Tīmūrid house was embedded in the notion that the exercise of benevolence was religiously meritorious.<sup>22</sup> Royal women are frequently presented as intercessors with the *pādshāhs* on behalf of individuals who had incurred the royal wrath and deserved punishment.<sup>23</sup> Miscreants avoided physical penalties because women interceded on their behalf. After all, Islamic scriptures described God as being merciful and beneficent.

Mughal emperors did marry to cement the bonds of loyalty between themselves and other power-holders—including their own

nobles. Though nominally servants of the Tīmūrid kings, courtiers acquired power in their own right. In practice, *pādshāhs* had to recognize the influence that such men exercised, either by marrying into prominent families or by sending their own sisters and daughters to them as brides. The son of Bayram *Khān*, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm (*Khān-i Khānān*), had marriage ties with the Tīmūrid house that crossed several generations. His mother was Humāyūn’s sister-in-law. His father’s first wife, Salīma Begam, eventually married Akbar, who was also her cousin. One of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm’s wives was the daughter of Māham Ānkā (Akbar’s wet-nurse) as well the sister of Akbar’s foster-brother and sometime favorite, Adham *Khān*. His own daughter became a wife of Akbar’s third son, Prince Danīyāl and his granddaughter a wife of *Shāh Jahān*.<sup>24</sup> Nūr Jahān was the daughter of I’timād al-Dawla and the sister of Āṣaf *Khān*, two Iranian *Shī‘īs* who were rising stars in Jahāngīr’s court. Her niece, Arjumānd Bānū, became the wife of *Shāh Jahān* and as famous as Mumtāz Maḥall.

Mughal wives, therefore, came from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds. Their marriages reflected a complex, fluid process of constructing alliances both inside and outside the royal house. In that context, the religious dimensions of the titles awarded women must have been an important source of pious celebration for the Indian Tīmūrids. Embracing and proclaiming a host of explicit Islamicate values, royal titulature drew attention away from the ancestry or religious backgrounds of imperial wives and anchored it in a common, international, Perso-Islamicate political discourse.

#### MOSQUES AND TOMBS

Women of the Tīmūrid royal house were frequently responsible for the construction of the mosques and tombs that became the most obvious monuments to Mughal glory. The emperors were responsible for surprisingly few of these buildings. An exchange between *Shāh Jahān*, exceptional for his determined mosque building, and his favorite daughter, Jahānārā, points to the vigor with which queens and princesses involved themselves in founding places of prayer. The area in front of the gates of the palace in Akbarabad (Agra) was occupied by a ramshackle bazaar. *Shāh Jahān* ordered the area leveled and wanted to create a new market with a big congregational mosque as its hub. Jahānārā stepped forward and, as the chronicler puts it, “...Her Majesty Princess Jahānārā

Begam who earnestly sought after the rewards of the next world, begged that the sacred place of worship might be erected out of her personal funds."<sup>25</sup> Shāh Jahān passed an order to Jahānārā's accountants to make the appropriate financial arrangements.

As the previous quotation from 'Ināyat Allāh Khān's history emphasized, the women of the Mughal court controlled considerable sums of money. Mumtāz Maḥall's legacy to her children, half of which went to Princess Jahānārā, included cash and goods worth some ten million rupees.<sup>26</sup> Between 1650 and 1728, of eight notable mosques built in Shahjahanabad (Delhi), three of them were sponsored by Shāh Jahān's wives, one by a wife of Awrangzib, and another by one of his daughters. Another, the Fakhr al-Masjid, was commissioned by the wife of Nawāb Shuja'at Khān: a minister of the court.<sup>27</sup> Often the mosques bore the names of their patronesses: the Faḥpurī Masjid was named after Shāh Jahān's wife Faḥpurī Begam, and the Awrangābādī Masjid, after Awrangzib's wife Awrangābādī Begam.

Women attached to the royal court, but not near relatives of the emperors, financed mosques which occupied prominent sites in the various capital cities. Māham Ānkā, Akbar's wetnurse, built the Khayr al-Manāzil mosque opposite the main gate of Delhi's Purānā Qil'a on the main road leading from the fort to the city.<sup>28</sup> In that way, royal females—some of royal spouses and other close personal attendants—seemed to have borne a particular responsibility for announcing the piety of the dynasty.

Historians can only speculate about the reasons for this division of religious labor. Did women somehow represent religiosity in a way that the males could not? Were the funds as well as the energies of the emperors and princes mostly committed to the actual management of the government with little left over for the luxury of mosque-building? Whatever may have been its root, a tradition of women's public patronage of religious buildings was well established.

The construction of mosques obviously would not have been possible without the availability of ready cash. The ever increasing amounts of silver which appeared in Mughal India's economy paid for fairly large and artfully embellished places for public prayer. Women derived their incomes in part from the assignments of land revenue [*jāgīrs*] offered them by the *pādshāhs*. Females of the

imperial household also invested in both domestic and international trading ventures.<sup>29</sup> Those ladies apparently retained control of their fortunes without the fear of being mulcted—a practice which sometimes occurred in other Muslim states, such as that of the Mamlūks.<sup>30</sup>

Religious merit accrued not only to the builders of prayer halls. Establishing and maintaining caravanserais [way-stations for travellers, merchants in particular] were also pious activities, in part because serais usually contained mosques. The heavily travelled route between Agra and the ports of Gujarat, a region firmly under imperial control, was provided with mosques and rest stations built by notables, including Tīmūrid ladies.<sup>31</sup> Given their deep involvement in commercial enterprise, the building of caravanserais not only earned religious merit, but facilitated the trade on which a portion of imperial women's income depended.

Beginning with their ancestor Tīmūr, the development of a cult of the sovereign became one more argument on behalf of his descendants' right to dominion.<sup>32</sup> At least their court panegyrists began to make the emperors objects of veneration in both a religious and political sense. 'Abū'l-Faḍl, for example, described Akbar in terms of the 'perfect man' [*al-insān al-kāmil*] of *ṣūfī* lore. His master was not only a model ruler, but a mystic capable of acting as preceptor to a close circle of disciples who were also important courtiers.<sup>33</sup>

The sacrality of a *pādshāh* extended to his corpse. These were treated with the same reverential awe afforded the remains of saints. Bābur had expressed the desire to be buried at Kabul. The transfer of his body became impossible when Shīr Shāh defeated the Mughal army at Kanauj in 947/1540. As a pious duty, Bega Begam stood watch over Bābur's makeshift tomb until she eventually received Shīr Shāh's permission to take Bābur's remains to Kabul.<sup>34</sup>

Bābur and Awrangzib excepted, *pādshāhs* as well as other members of the Bayt-i Tīmūr had lavish tombs. Religious puritans may have expressed disapproval of elaborate and expensive mausolea, but the royal family seldom listened to such fulminations. For a dynasty, its ancestral tombs were yet another sort of argument in favor of the right to rule.<sup>35</sup> Tombs proclaimed an appeal to a dynasty's historical depth and implied that God must have favored the efforts of the individuals buried in them. These tombs were part of a cult of the sovereign and became the objects of popular veneration. Individuals

presented themselves at imperial tombs, offered their greetings, and circumambulated the imperial cenotaphs as they might have done at the tomb of a *ṣūfi* saint.

The building of imperial tombs was, like the construction of a mosque, a public expression of piety which prominently involved Tīmūrid women. As noted above, Bābur's widow guarded his body, accompanied it to Kabul and ensured its burial there according to Bābur's wishes—all that during a state of war. According to legend, Hamīda Bānū Begam, one of the wives of Humāyūn and the mother of Akbar, guided the construction of his mausoleum in Delhi. Nūr Jahān did the same for Jahāngīr, and herself, at Lahore.<sup>36</sup>

In practical terms, the piety of males and females converged in the public veneration that both offered to the tombs of *ṣūfi* saints.<sup>37</sup> Akbar and all of his heirs had a special attachment to the tomb of *Khwāja Mu'īn al-Dīn Čishtī* at Ajmer. Akbar's veneration for and patronage of the shrine contributed to the reputation that *Khwāja Ṣāhib's* tomb acquired. The *Dargā* of *Mu'īn al-Dīn* became a popular destination for pilgrims from throughout the subcontinent. Akbar himself, accompanied by his entire court, including its women, made many formal pilgrimages to Ajmer. As a sign of humility and devotion, he sometimes went on foot.

Akbar's descendants, quite literally, followed in his footsteps. They also contributed to the building of a number of subordinate tombs for the disciples of *Mu'īn al-Dīn*, who had become saints in their own right. The tombs of *Mu'īn al-Dīn's* daughters and granddaughters [the *Arḥāt al-Nūr*] provided an area of the shrine-complex reserved for the devotions of women. Imperial women also spent their own funds on the almost constant refurbishment or embellishment of existing structures as well as the construction of new ones. *Jahānārā*, for instance, built the *Begamī Dālān*, which, as the name implies, was a place specifically dedicated to the use of female pilgrims.<sup>38</sup>

Saints such as *Khwāja Mu'īn al-Dīn* gained prominence in part because they had reputations for working wonders, events that had no rational [*'aqlī*] explanation. The spiritual power they possessed through God's grace, their *baraka*, made it possible for them to intercede with the Almighty on behalf of everyone from the most exalted to the commonest commoner, female and male alike. A saint's *baraka* did not diminish with death. It might grow stronger

as more and more people experienced a saint's miracles. Making it possible for barren women to have children was one of the most important wonders which holy men could work.

The veneration of saints like Mu'in al-Dīn was more than an elite practice, but one that drew together ordinary men and women, regal females as well as males. Support for a popular shrine established a personal connection between the commonality and its would-be masters as well as, less obviously, its mistresses. That devotion was something more than a cynical manipulation of popular credulity intended to build the Mughal state. A mutually shared belief in spiritual power partly inspired it. Though chronicles usually featured formulaic references to Islamic piety, much of what men and women hoped to attain in spiritual or material terms from the respect afforded saints arose from a shared faith in individual holy persons living in this world as well as in the next.

#### DEVOTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE FAITH

Dynastic histories ranging from *Khwāja Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad's Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* to *Bakhtawar Khān's Mir'āt al-'Ālam*<sup>39</sup> contain hundreds of biographical sketches of holy men (more rarely, holy women)<sup>40</sup> who had some contact, often very brief, with the emperor or his courtiers. The notices are couched in a series of similar phrases explaining that the individual mentioned had a great reputation for sanctity and scholarship. Mughal chronicles, on the whole, tended to refer to Islam in a series of quick nods to one or another of its duties or practices. Such references were not always edifying. Bābur often recollected the drinking parties he attended by noting that they had occurred at the hour of one or another *adhān*.<sup>41</sup>

Histories of the Mughal period sometimes refer to Islam's Great Traditions almost indifferently. One chronicle noted that an emissary from Mecca arrived at the court of *Shāh Jahān*. He presented the emperor with a key to the Ka'ba. Having noted the delivery, the matter disappeared. *Shāh Jahān* seemed to have no reaction at all to this connection to the very center of Islam. Moreover, the author immediately provided a much longer and livelier account of that year's celebration of Nawrūz [the Persian New Year].<sup>42</sup>

Descriptions of royal progresses to a *masjid-i jāmi'* [a congregational mosque]—important for the Friday noon-prayer offered in it—found their way into the official histories. The place

of such narratives in these texts was usually to glorify the emperors by describing the equipage of their elephants or praising the generosity of the *pādshāhs* for their distributions of coins or jewels. Strict adherence to the five daily prayers might well have been part of life in the court. If the daily prayers were attended, Tīmūrid histories only expressed the most perfunctory interest in them. Women of the royal house probably did sometimes take part in the public progresses for Friday prayers that expressed imperial piety. But modern historians have found it difficult to get behind the expected courtly rhetoric to discover some sense of what royal women—especially those with non-Muslim ancestry—actually believed and did. Mughal-era women may well have thought any interest in such matters inappropriate.

Domestic prayers and rituals, not necessarily ones that comply with revivalist Muslim standards, have come to light in several, mostly indirect, ways. At the court of the Awadhī Nawābs at Lucknow, women played important practical as well as symbolic roles in the religious ceremonies commemorating the birth-anniversaries of the Twelve Imāms and the mourning rites for Imām Ḥusayn. Muslim and non-Muslim women took part in the Muḥarram rituals.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, contemporary scholars have begun to take note of the fasts, vow-takings, readings of pious tales, and prayers that take place in the home—within the special domain of females. Women, both Shī'ī and Sunnī, are the principal participants in those rituals.<sup>44</sup> Similar devotional exercises probably took place within the Mughals' imperial residences, but the details and motivations of such ceremonies have remained obscure.

The two sacred cities of Mecca and Medina, the Ḥarāmāyn, figured in the life of Mughal dynasts as a political convenience: a way of getting rid of overmighty nobles (i.e., Bayram Khān) and rebellious brothers (i.e., Humāyūn's brother, Mīrzā Kāmran) by sending them off on the pilgrimage. But with regard to the spiritual status acquired by making the *hajj* to Mecca, imperial women of the Tīmūrid household had a distinct advantage over emperors. Women were able to fulfil that sacred duty of Islam. No king of the Indian Bayt-i Tīmūr had even a pretence to the *hajjī's* special status. The Mughals were not unique in that deficiency. The Ottoman sultans enjoyed the honor of being 'Protectors of the Ḥarāmāyn,' yet of all of the House of Osman's progeny, only Selim I 'Yavuz'

(who had wrested the title of 'Guardian of Mecca and Medina' from the Mamluks) ever journeyed to the Hijaz.

Given the constant, direct supervision that the Indian Tīmūrid state required, making the pilgrimage to Mecca was impossible for the *pādshāhs* of India. Their close female relatives, especially the widows and daughters of dead rulers, had both the means and the opportunity to become *hajjīs*. A number of them apparently made the pilgrimage more than once.<sup>45</sup> In Akbar's reign, his aunt Gulbadan Begam led a three-year expedition to the holy places, on which most of the senior women of the Tīmūrid house accompanied her.<sup>46</sup> Akbar was delighted by the news of the group's return and honored them by sending Prince Sālim (the future emperor Jahāngīr) to meet them. When Akbar heard that Gulbadan and her companions were approaching the palace, he rode out to welcome the returning *hajjīs*. Significantly, in terms of the actual practice of Islam in the Sālim era, Gulbadan's party returned from the Ḥarāmāyn to Akbar's court at Agra by way of Ajmer, where they paid their respects at Khwāja Mu'īn al-Dīn's tomb.

In the late twentieth century, jets and buses have made the rituals of the *hajj* available to some one or two million Muslims per year. Even so, close association with a *hajjī* has remained a particular blessing. The spiritual implications of having a number of pilgrims within one's household were probably greater in the early modern era when accomplishing that duty was a comparatively rare achievement. *Pādshāhs* of the Bayt-i Tīmūr, therefore, depended on the vicarious impact of the spiritual attainments of their female kin to compensate for their own inability to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Emperors did seek other links to the spiritual benefits of the *hajj*. Akbar's favorite living saint, *Shaykh* Sālim Čiṣhtī, spent many years in the Holy Cities, which only added to his reputation as a mystic. *Pādshāhs* also sent gifts regularly to the Ḥarāmāyn. They paid for the ships that took many poorer Muslims to Arabia. Emperors even gave the *hajjīs* spending money and provisions. Indian Tīmūrid women supported pilgrims with donations that sometimes exceeded the emperors' contributions. Awrangzīb's daughter, Zīb al-Nisā', provided 7,000 rupees to Mullā Ṣafi al-Dīn Qazwīnī, who wrote a narrative of his experience.<sup>47</sup>



As the case of the *hajj* demonstrates, women contributed to the Indian Tīmūrids' religious reputation in a way that males never could. Women were pious in ways that the emperors were not. Women sustained forcefully Tīmūrid boasting about being good Muslim rulers—the 'refuge of the *Khilāfat*.' Women made the same kind of public contributions to the imperial house's reputation when they added their wealth to that of the *pādshāhs* to provide for the material wants of scholars and mystics.

#### WOMEN AS PATRONS OF THE LEARNED AND HOLY

Imperial patronage for Islamic institutions or individual holy and learned men must be considered as part of a battery of arguments aimed—perhaps without the cunning of modern politicians—at securing support for the Indian Tīmūrids' assertions about their authority in a part of the world that had witnessed the arrival of many rulers who proclaimed their attachment to Islam. Before the *Mughals*, most of those earlier sultanates had disappeared within three generations or less. The Tīmūrid dynasty's endurance rested in part on its ability to secure the support of prominent saints and scholars through the exercise of imperial *largesse*.<sup>48</sup>

Genuinely pious sentiments may have moved individual emperors to make donations, but the aggressive quest to control Islam's institutional *loci*—mosques, religious academies and shrines—must have been included in any sovereign's calculation of possible political advantage. A *pādshāh's*, or a *begam's*, support for a place of prayer or pilgrimage, sacred scholarship, or mystical learning meant that the people who attended, journeyed to, or lived in those establishments were exposed to constant reminders that their imperial patrons, male and female, were worthy of respect on religious grounds.

Endowments [*awqāf*] were a common way of supporting religious institutions. More importantly, imperial gifts afforded a constant reminder to any persons attached to royally-supported religious establishments that their livelihoods depended on pious benefactions. Prayer leaders, readers of the Holy Qur'ān, religious students, sufis, and even menials drew both cash salaries and rations from these establishments. Distributions of clothing or food could sustain the religious professionals as well as the indigent.

*Awqāf* also benefitted their donors. Apart from the spiritual merit of such a gift, family members, servants, or favorites acted as managers for these pious trusts, thereby obtaining a salary, but also authority over management of the property which provided the endowment's income. In other places in the *dār al-Islām*, endowments were a possible hedge against confiscation by predatory rulers and bandits.<sup>49</sup> Remarkably few deeds of endowment [*waqfnāmas*] have survived from the Mughal period, but references to *awqāf* do appear. The Tāj Maḥall, for example, received income from shops surrounding the mausoleum and from villages in the vicinity of Agra whose income was dedicated to the tomb's upkeep.<sup>50</sup> Yet, not a single deed of endowment for the Tāj has come to light.<sup>51</sup>

Mughal support for religious scholars or mystics, due in part to the influx of silver bullion into India, took other forms. The ready availability of cash meant that, by 1600, the Mughal government collected most of its tax-demand in silver coin. Grants of land revenue, known as *madad-i ma'āsh*,<sup>52</sup> were the most common way of providing royal patronage both to individuals and institutions. The imperial chancery, often with the direct knowledge of the emperor, issued many of those documents.<sup>53</sup> Subordinate officials also made a variety of grants to sustain what may be called a 'religious gentry,' without the ruler's direct consent.<sup>54</sup>

Not surprisingly, women of the Mughal house issued *madad-i ma'āsh* grants or similar benefactions under their own seals.<sup>55</sup> While the grants which they gave were sometimes to males, pious but non-regal women were frequent recipients of such rewards. Women of the royal house might also be called in by the emperor to provide likely candidates for these awards. Thus, Jahāngīr turned to his father's foster sister, Ḥajjī Kōka, to recommend women who deserved *madad-i ma'āsh*.<sup>56</sup> Some of those women were apparently the wives and daughters of dead religious scholars.

The issuance of imperial grants to the female dependents of religious specialists gives modern scholars one of the few direct sources they can find about the lives of those who might be termed the middle class. Historians have usually assumed that households which possessed any discretionary wealth tried as much as possible to reproduce the models provided by the imperial establishment.<sup>57</sup> Nothing in those documents has altered that basic impression. *Madad-i ma'āsh* addressed to women contained the same provisions

as those that benefitted men. They bear the usual injunctions to local officials to measure the land carefully, to insure that all the income from the crops on it goes directly to the grantee, and to see that revenue officers do not pester the recipients by demanding a new decree every year.<sup>58</sup>

Contemporary scholars can extract only a few details about the lives of ordinary Muslim women in South Asia from imperial grants. Nevertheless, historians can achieve some general sense of the significance of women—even those not directly connected to the *pādshāhs*, their mothers, wives, aunts, cousins and retainers. Although the widows and daughters of deceased learned and holy men provided no obvious service to the empire, the phrase, “to pray for the continuance of this sultanate,” which appeared in all such documents, as well as the occasional references to an “army of prayer” demonstrated an imperial concern for the spiritual well-being of the realm. Imperial grants enlisted women in the army of prayer.

#### CONCLUSION

One great limitation in discussing the lives of women in Mughal India and their significance in sustaining the Bayt-i Tīmūr remains the inability to fine tune a sense of chronology. The idioms of Perso-Islamic statecraft and social description did not vary much over the entire span of the Indian Tīmūrids’ rule. The symbolic vocabulary of the Mughals had such enormous power that it remained in use long after the Tīmūrid *pādshāhs* had lost any real power. The Nizāms of Hyderabad, the Nawābs of Lucknow, even non-Muslims—Rajput Maharajas and Maratha Raos—tried their best to reproduce the Mughal’s symbolic phrasings. The British Raj attempted, for at least a while, to emulate the ‘Great Mogul.’ But where are the significant breaks in all of that seeming continuity? Historians of the Indian Tīmūrids have yet to attain the sophistication of Leslie Peirce, who has re-periodized Ottoman history by examining the lives of imperial women.

Many Mughal and Ottoman historians still labor under a range of intellectual constraints that may be traced back to the eighteenth century. Edward Gibbon, one of the West’s most influential historians, perhaps has taught too many generations of his intellectual heirs that empires have done nothing so well as decline

and fall. Much historiography continues to concentrate on the end of the Mughals and search for those little cracks in the foundation that presaged eventual disintegration. A distinctly masculine vision sometimes lighted upon women as a major cause of the tumble. As with historians of the Ottoman state, "the rule of women" sometimes provided Mughal historians with a ready reason for the collapse.<sup>59</sup> Were Mughal *pādshāhs*, or the Awadhī Nawābs and Maratha Peshwas who tried to continue the Tīmūrid political dispensation, weakened by spending too much time in the company of women? A closer look at the roles that women did play can, at least, lead to the dismissal of that hasty assignment of blame. Not only were there individual strong women, but, as a group, females were as determined as males to keep the empire (and its would-be successor states) a vibrant enterprise.

Women contributed in several ways to the success of the Indian Tīmūrids. Through the building and maintenance of prominent mosques or tombs and through their management of imperial, religiously-sanctioned, largesse, women employed highly visible as well as powerful means to further the cause of Tīmūrid hegemony. In another, more spiritual fashion, women devoted their energies to the growth and strengthening of that state. By attending public rituals, such as the *hajj*, or by couching their own identities in terms of the titles and examples of the holy women of Islamic lore, they lent the dynasty a important reputation for piety. Finally, royal decrees themselves pointed to some trust in an unseen religious force, by their invariable injunction to "pray for the ever-lasting sultanate." This was an important admission that the piety of women was a mainstay of the Tīmūrid state and that without it the dynasty stood in peril of collapse.

#### NOTES

This paper owes much to the trenchant comments of Dr. Gail Minault on its first draft. Dr. Gavin Hambly's erudition has saved me from many factual errors. His patience and gentle prodding have made this a much better paper. I am grateful to them both.

1. Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 12.

2. Ironically, Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century sometimes accused their Mughal-era grandmothers of discouraging women's

education, which had in earlier times been common. See Gail Minault, "Hali's *Majlis un-Nissa*: Purdah and Woman Power in Nineteenth Century India," in *Islamic Society and Culture*, eds. Milton Israel and N. Wagle (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp. 39-49.

3. Ellison Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); see the following reviews of this book: Gavin Hambly, *American Historical Review* 99 (June, 1994): 954-55; Gregory Kozlowski, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114 (December, 1994): 687-88; and Barbara Metcalf, "Narrating Lives: A Mughal Empress, A French Nabob, A Nationalist Muslim Intellectual," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54 (May, 1995): 474-80.

4. Such artificial distinctions have also distorted perceptions of Europe's pre-modern past. See Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds., *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), pp. 1-17.

5. Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 65-95, 124-51.

6. Many of these observations are derived from Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 5-8.

7. Bajendra De and Bains Prashad, eds. and trans., *The Tabaqāt-i Akbarī of Khwājah Nizamuddin Ahmad* (1936 reprint, Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1992), vol. 2, p. 153; this translation is particularly valuable for its cross references to other histories of the Mughal period.

8. De and Prashad, pp. 318-21.

9. De and Prashad, pp. 236-37; the text refers to Hamīda Bānū Begam by her posthumous title: Maryām Makānī.

10. De and Prashad, p. 101.

11. De and Prashad, pp. 227-28.

12. Barbara Metcalf, "Too Little and Too Much: Reflections on Muslims in the History of India," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54.4 (November, 1995): 951-67.

13. Gregory Kozlowski, "Padishahs, Pirs and Gurus: The Personal Dynamics of Faith and Polity in Mughal India" (Paper delivered at the seminar: *The Shaping of Indo-Muslim Identity in Pre-Modern India*, Duke University, 20-22 May, 1995).

14. Metcalf, "Narrating Lives," 476-77.

15. Translated and quoted in Wayne Begley and Ziaud-din Ahmad Desai, *Taj Mahal, The Illumined Tomb* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1989), p. 11.

16. Wayne Begley, "The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of its Symbolic Meaning," *The Art Bulletin* 61 (1979): 7-37.

17. Peirce, pp. 17-18.

18. Peirce., p. 17; for the following, pp. 116, 147, 170-85.

19. Gul-Badan Begam, *Humāyūn-Nāma*, trans. Annette Beveridge, (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1974, repr.), pp. 203–97.
20. John Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam*, eds. Michel Mazzaoui and Vera Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1990), pp. 85–125.
21. S. Tirmizi, comp. and trans., *Edicts From the Mughal Harem* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-Delli, 1979), pp. 11–16.
22. Persian terms of address, such as *bandaparwar* or *bandanawāz*, indicated that the addressee was the 'feeder' and 'sustainer' of 'slaves/the poor;' gifts and hospitality inspired much of the vocabulary with which Persian (and eventually Ūrdū) described social/political interaction.
23. For example, Qazwīnī on Mumtāz Maḥall in *Taj Mahal*, p. 14.
24. Annemarie Schimmel, "Abdur Rahim and the Sufis," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam*, pp. 153–60.
25. Wayne Begley and Ziyaud-din Ahmad Desai, eds. and trans., *The Shah Jahan Nama of 'Inayat Khan* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 206.
26. Abd al-Hamid Lahawri, in Begley and Desai, *Taj Mahal*, p. 23.
27. Stephen Blake, *Shahjahanabad, The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639–1739* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 53.
28. Catherine Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 41–42.
29. Gregory Kozlowski, "Muslim Women and the Control of Property in North India," in *Women in Colonial India*, ed. J. Krishnamurty (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 114–32.
30. Carl Petry, "Class Solidarity versus Gender Gain: Women as Custodians of Property in Later Medieval Egypt," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, eds. Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 122–42.
31. Asher, *Mughal Architecture*, p. 134.
32. Douglas Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 25–50.
33. Peter Hardy, "Abu'l Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padishah," in *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries, II*, ed. Christian Troll (New Delhi: Vikas, 1985), pp. 114–137.
34. Gul-Badan Begam, *Humāyūn Nāma*, pp. 216–17.
35. Catherine Asher, "Legacy and Legitimacy," in *Sharī'āt and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* ed. Katherine Ewing (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1988), pp. 79–97.
36. Asher, *Mughal Architecture*, pp. 45–47, 172–74.
37. For the variety of such places, Christian Troll, ed., *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

38. Peter Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī of Ajmer* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).
39. *Mir'āt al-'Ālām*, ed. Sajjida Alvi, 2 vols. (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1979).
40. Schimmel, "Abdur Rahim and the Sufis," for an example of a highly regarded woman-mystic, p. 158.
41. Annette Beveridge, trans., *Babur Nama* (1922; reprint, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 414-18.
42. Begley and Desai, *Shah Jahan Nama*, p. 300.
43. See Michael Fisher, ch. 21 in this volume.
44. Vernon Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Sh'i Devotional Rituals in South Asia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).
45. Gul-Badan Begam, *Humāyūn Nāma*, p. 236.
46. De and Prashad, *Tabaqāt-i Akbarī*, vol. 2, p. 557.
47. Michael Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Indian Experience, 1500-1800* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), pp. 44; 107-21.
48. Gregory Kozlowski, "Imperial Authority, Benefactions and Endowments (*Awqāf*) in Mughal India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38/3 (1995): 355-70.
49. Kozlowski, *Muslim Endowments and Society in British India*, (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 10-32; Petry, "Class Solidarity versus Gender Gain."
50. Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay: Asia House, 1963), pp. 312-13.
51. Begley and Desai, *Taj Mahal*, p. 183.
52. Other terms were also used, Kozlowski, "Imperial Authority."
53. S.A. Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents, 1526-1627* (Delhi: Manohar, 1989).
54. Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 228-67.
55. Tirmizi, *Edicts From the Mughal Harem*, pp. 50-53, 100-01.
56. Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents*, pp. 28-30.
57. Kozlowski, "Muslim Women and the Control of Property."
58. M.A. Ansari, comp. and trans., *Administrative Documents of Mughal India* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing, 1984), pp. 49-52, 55-57.
59. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. vii-viii, 255-56.

## WOMEN AND THE FEMININE IN THE COURT AND HIGH CULTURE OF AWADH, 1722–1856

*Michael H. Fisher*

*Women in Awadh (India) controlled considerable political power, linked families, and shaped Shi'ī devotionism. Elite men adopted feminine roles in literary, religious, and artistic expression.*

During its period of relative autonomy under the *Nawābī* dynasty (c. 1722–1856), Awadh became an arena in which Persianate Shi'ī and indigenous regional traditions combined to create a distinctive culture in which women and explicitly feminine themes played a variety of particularly significant roles. Women's hypergamous marriages established and maintained the bonds which linked—and partly determined the social status of—powerful families in the Awadh capital and countryside. Elite women shaped the foreign policies of this major 'successor-state' to the Mughal Empire and, at times, controlled many of Awadh's financial resources. Numerous women achieved upward social mobility within the separate women's worlds of the Awadh capital. The dominant Shi'ī culture of the court provided distinctive values and forms of expression for women of the capital—including courtesans who helped guide Lucknow's sophisticated culture.

Indian and British men also particularly identified the court culture of Awadh with the feminine. From 1764 onward, the English East India Company encountered, penetrated, and came to dominate Awadh. Many hostile British and Indian commentators sought to denigrate Lucknow's male rulers and courtiers by stressing either the themes of their sexual exploitation of women and/or of their 'effeminacy' [*zanāna-pan*]. The British used these characterizations to justify a range of aggressive colonial policies which they imposed



on Awadh, including the extraction of its vast wealth, demobilization of its army, piecemeal annexation of its territory, and intervention in virtually all aspects of its internal administration. On their part, some Awadh rulers and male courtiers adopted explicitly feminine identities on occasion, particularly in literary and/or religious expressions. Thus, women and the concept of the feminine played powerful and polysemous roles in the development of the court and high culture of Awadh.

#### CONTEXT

The north Indian province of Awadh [variant spellings: Oudh, Oude, and Avadh] stands central to the history of India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some twenty-four thousand square miles of the upper Gangetic plain lay within this province. As the Mughal Empire fissioned into its component parts during the eighteenth century, the rulers of Awadh emerged as a dominant force, strategically located between the Mughal Emperor and the advancing English East India Company. Over time, the hereditary *Nawābs* of Awadh sponsored a rich cultural world in their capitals: Faizabad and, more especially, Lucknow. While this court culture mixed indigenous regional and exogenous *Shī'ī* traditions, it also remained in tension with the Awadh countryside.

For centuries, the indigenous people of Awadh retained and developed their own strong and distinctive cultural traditions, including *Awadhī*, a dialect of Eastern Hindi.<sup>1</sup> During the sixteenth century, the Mughal Empire had conquered and incorporated this region as one of its premier provinces. Most of Awadh's population (*circa* eleven million by the early nineteenth century) lived in the countryside, under the power of mainly Rajput or Bhumihar Brahmin landholders. Many of these landholding clans legitimated their hold over the region through sanction by divine authority. A typical etiologic myth had a clan ancestor, while on religious pilgrimage, receive instruction from the Hindu Goddess to conquer and settle the particular area, which became that clan's stronghold.<sup>2</sup> Many Rajput landholders traced their descent from Rama and Sita, royal incarnations of the Hindu deities Vishnu and Lakshmi. The extended patrilineal ties that linked landholders to the villages under them were founded on hypergamous, extra-descent line [*gotra*] but intra-caste [*jātī*] marriages. Local landholding families also used hypergamous marriages to establish or reinforce extra-regional

political alliances; for example, Rajput landholders in Awadh linked themselves to Rajput houses in Rajasthan and elsewhere in north India. Hierarchically ranked marriages proved a public expression of the relative ranks of the families involved. Strategies of upward mobility by families therefore involved either providing brides to established, higher ranking families or else inducing such established families to provide brides to them. While women thus normatively moved into affinal families socially superior to their natal ones, they ranked lower than men and women born into those families. Thus, while hypergamous marriage alliances could enhance the status of the two families involved, they also largely ensured the subordination of the bride among her in-laws.

Muslims, mostly of the *Sunnī* sect, comprised about ten percent of Awadh's population. Muslim landholders also formed alliances and recognized hierarchies of rank by means of the marriages of their daughters.<sup>3</sup> Their families sought carefully to control marriages—as charged with social and political significance as they were. After the *Shī'ī* *Nawābī* dynasty established itself in Awadh, its power and patronage induced numbers of regional landholding and service elite families—both Hindu and *Sunnī* Muslim—to convert to *Shī'ism*, or at least to orient themselves culturally toward that branch of Islam.

As the *Shī'ī* court of Awadh developed, it came to recognize three 'graded' types of matrimonial links. The highest form of marriage in the Awadh court—as well as in Islam generally—remained *nikāḥ*, or contractual marriage. In a *nikāḥ* wedding, the wife contracted to marry the husband in exchange for the promise of a sum of money, *mahr*, from him.<sup>4</sup> The Qur'an favors this form of marriage and most commentators on the Qur'an interpret its strictures as permitting a man no more than four wives at any one time. While the Qur'an requires all *nikāḥ* wives to be treated equally by the husband, in the Awadh dynasty, the first *nikāḥ* wife held premier prestige and status, although she did not necessarily hold more actual power than the ruler's other wives or favorites of the moment. Further, in the Qur'an and *sharī'a*, all children of such *nikāḥ* marriages enjoyed full rights of inheritance, specific to their gender. In the Awadh ruling house, only one of the chief *nikāḥ* wife's sons (not always the eldest) normatively inherited the throne and the ruler's personal property, while other sons often suffered

marginalization. Of the eleven men of the Awadh dynasty who inherited rule over the province, six were born to the chief *nikāḥ* wife of their predecessor, although not necessarily as the eldest son. Two other successful inheritors were sons of a junior *nikāḥ* wife. One other ruler succeeded his son-less father-in-law. The British deposed the two remaining rulers quickly after their succession, on the grounds that they were not the children of a *nikāḥ* marriage (or, indeed, the biological descendants of their putative father at all). Thus, while primogeniture rules of inheritance did not prevail in the succession of rulers, *nikāḥ* marriage conveyed a strong degree of legitimacy that most Awadh courtiers, and also the British, recognized.

*Nikāḥ* marriage to an Awadh ruler, particularly as chief wife, did not guarantee a woman power at court, but it enhanced her opportunities for power. Ordinarily, she did gain control over a separate household of her own, which she usually retained (albeit often on a reduced scale) after her husband's death. Further, *nikāḥ* marriage greatly increased the prospect that one of her sons would inherit the Awadh throne. As the mother of the incumbent ruler, a woman had far more opportunities to perpetuate her influence than those wives whose sons who did not succeed. The history of the Awadh dynasty was replete with intra-familial tensions, much of this tension coming from rival wives and a ruler's mother, each functioning from within a separate household.

*Shī'ites* generally hold that the Prophet Muḥammad also permitted *mut'ah* marriage [literally "marriage of use or pleasure"]. In such a *mut'ah* marriage, a woman contracted to be a man's wife for a stipulated time period in exchange for a stated amount of money. Most *Shī'ites*—but not *Sunnīs*—consider *mut'ah* marriage still permitted, on the grounds that its prohibition had been by the *Sunnī* caliph 'Umar—whom most *Shī'ites* do not recognize as a legitimate authority.<sup>5</sup> The Awadh court recognized no restrictions on the number of *mut'ah* wives a man could have, either at once or serially. The wives and children in such *mut'ah* marriages had specified rights of maintenance, but not full inheritance from the patriarch.

Women and children related to the Awadh rulers through a *nikāḥ* or *mut'ah* marriage sometimes managed to have themselves included among the official ranks of 'guaranteed pensioners,' that is, people receiving interest income from massive loans given by the Awadh

rulers to the English Company during the nineteenth century. Such status brought with it both protection by the Company and its Resident [local political agent] from the vicissitudes of court politics and also extraterritorial exemption from the Awadh judicial system. Nevertheless, Awadh rulers occasionally tried to prevent the British from giving such protection or shelter to the secondary wives of their predecessors, even if they were 'guaranteed pensioners,' using the grounds that relations between the ruler and the women of his family were a domestic issue outside of legitimate British political interest. The British, in fact, either remained aloof or else intervened to protect the women of the Awadh dynasty not according to a fixed set of procedures but rather according to British interests and/or the policies of the time.<sup>6</sup>

A third type of marriage practiced in Awadh was *dolī*. In this, a lower ranking family sent their daughter to her husband in a palanquin, a *dolī*, and he simply accepted her into his harem without any formal marriage contract. Nevertheless, a wife of this type held some customary and moral status. A *dolī* wife, indeed, could become quite powerful, depending on her personal influence over her 'husband.'

Finally, a number of women entered the harems of the Awadh rulers—and other male courtiers—without legal sanction of marriage. Many women became concubines by purchase or, occasionally, by force. Others apparently willingly entered the harem, as a relatively attractive alternative to their earlier situation, of orphan, courtesan, divorcee, or widow. Most of these women did not spend their entire lives in purdah, as did most of the women in one of the kinds of marriage discussed above, hence their experience of the outer world was usually more extensive.

Attending the women of the harem were numerous servants, mostly females and eunuchs. To varying degrees, these servants had access to the wealth and power of the ruler's household. They also served as intermediaries between the women in purdah and the outside world.

The social status and rights held by all the ruler's women and their children depended in a large measure on their personal relationship to him. Occasionally, even initially low-ranked women rose to positions of great power. Should they bear a child whom the husband recognized, they conventionally received both the honorific '*Mahall*' and also a regular stipend from him. Further, numerous

women born into the Awadh dynasty exercised influence, particularly by dint of their personal relationship to the ruler or their mothers. Such women usually had arranged marriages, often with politically powerful men of the Awadh court.

In the environment of the harem, specifically women's worlds developed to an extensive degree. The large number of women competing for personal influence over any one *nawāb*, however, often meant that the power they wielded tended to be unstable and transitory. Within the complex and hierarchic world of women, the stakes were high and mobility—up or down—could be rapid. During the ruling *Nawābī* family's 135 years of dominance in Awadh, it pursued a series of marriage strategies, each reflecting its political goals of the time.

#### WOMEN, STATUS, AND THE NAWĀBĪ DYNASTY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

What became the *Nawābī* dynasty of Awadh initially had no links to that province. In 1722, the Mughal Emperor appointed a relatively recent *Shī'ī* immigrant from Iran, best known by his title, Sa'ādat *Khān*, as his *nawāb* [deputy] and as *subedār* [governor] of Awadh.<sup>7</sup> Sa'ādat *Khān* (r. 1722–39) soon established his family as de facto dynastic rulers of that province. As he and his family rapidly changed their status during the tumultuous eighteenth century in north India, their marriage strategies and the position of their women altered repeatedly.

Before his immigration to India (in his native city of Nishapur, Iran), Sa'ādat *Khān*'s family had protected the integrity of its social position and property by marrying him to his patrilateral parallel cousin—the preferred Muslim marriage pattern par excellence.<sup>8</sup> Since the bride married within her family, her wedding did not cost it any dowry or create any subordinating bonds, as an exogamous marriage would have done. It also reinforced existing kinship bonds within the extended family.

After Sa'ādat *Khān* immigrated to India (c. 1708), he pursued a career as an administrator and military commander in the Mughal Empire. To enhance his opportunities as he rose from post to post, he adopted an ambitious, extra-familial marriage strategy. He gained support for his burgeoning cause by inducing three Irani families, already highly placed within the Mughal service elite, each to marry one of their daughters to him by *nikāh*. Thereafter, he and his in-laws proved mutually supportive in the faction-ridden Mughal

Imperial court. Indeed, among the various ethnic groups at court, Iranis particularly—a religious and cultural minority there—practiced ethnic endogamy as a political policy.<sup>9</sup>

As Sa'adat Khān rose quickly in the Mughal administration, he also continued his earlier strategy of intra-familial marriage alliances. He did so in order to create the block of loyal subordinates, whom he required in light of his increasing responsibilities, particularly as he lacked sons of his own. Sa'adat Khān summoned at least four of his nephews from Iran to join his service: three sisters' sons and one brother's son. He bound each of his sisters' sons to him more firmly through marrying each to one of his own daughters by *nikāh*, thus reinforcing consanguinity with affinal ties. Of these three, the most important marriage was that of his eldest daughter, Şadr al-Nisā' Begam (also known as Şadr-i Jahān Begam), who married her patrilineal cross-cousin Şafdar Jang.<sup>10</sup> Şadr al-Nisā' Begam tolerated, and Şafdar Jang took, no other *nikāh* wife.

In a large measure through his wife's influence, Şafdar Jang (r. 1739–54) inherited Sa'adat Khān's political position (including the governorship of Awadh). He then quickly reached the highest levels in the Mughal administration. By 1748 he had made himself *Wazīr* [Chief Minister] of the Empire. Throughout his career, Şafdar Jang drew upon the support of his consanguine and affinal relations, just as they received employment from him. Following the second type of marriage strategy adopted by Sa'adat Khān (linking his family to other established notables of his ethnic group at the Mughal court), Şafdar Jang married his son and heir, Shujā' al-Dawla (r. 1754–75), to the daughter of a distinguished Irani courtier. She had made herself a favorite, and virtually the adopted daughter, of the Mughal Emperor, who gave her the most commonly used title: Bahū [Daughter-in-law] Begam.<sup>11</sup> Her biological father in fact joined forces with Şafdar Jang and died fighting alongside him. Her brothers also assumed prominent places in the Awadh Court, receiving handsome incomes and employment from their brother-in-law and his descendants.<sup>12</sup> Şafdar Jang further took into his service other of his relatives, including the husbands of his brothers' daughters. Thus, Şafdar Jang used *nikāh* marriage alliances to broaden the pool of relatives on whom he could rely for loyal service. They too benefited from their connection to this Mughal official as he repeatedly—albeit temporarily—made himself the most powerful of Mughal

courtiers and effectively among the most powerful of autonomous governors.

Bahū Begam and her mother-in-law, Şadr al-Nisā' Begam, continued to play major roles in Awadh and north Indian politics until their deaths. Because of the restrictions of purdah, they worked through their extensive staffs—some tens of thousands of people. Their main agents were eunuchs—with whom they could interact face-to-face.<sup>13</sup> Bahū Begam proved Şhujā' al-Dawla's chief financial backer. When he lost a decisive series of battles against the English East India Company in 1764, she used funds under her control to enable him to pay off the Rs. 200,000,000 penalty which the English Company demanded and thereby emerge as the Company's chief ally in north India. Thereafter, she continued as the trustee of Şhujā' al-Dawla's vast treasury. Together with her mother-in-law, Şadr al-Nisā' Begam, she also controlled much land revenue in Awadh.

Şhujā' al-Dawla, Bahū Begam, and Şadr al-Nisā' developed a distinguished court culture in Awadh, particularly in their capital of the time, Faizabad. Awadh's economic, cultural, and political efflorescence made it the premier 'successor-state' to the Mughal Empire in north India. The Awadh court poured its wealth into patronage of almost all the high arts—particularly architecture, dance, music, painting, poetry, and *Shi'ī* religious scholarship and ritual performances.

The family's pattern of strategic marriages to the daughters of prominent Mughal officials was repeated and even extended into the next generation. Şhujā' al-Dawla and Bahū Begam married her only son, Āşaf al-Dawla (r. 1775–97), to Şhāms al-Nisā', the daughter and granddaughter of *wazīrs* of the Empire.<sup>14</sup> Further, since she belonged to a Turani (originally Central Asian) *Sunnī* house, this marriage alliance sought to bring together leading figures in the two most powerful factions at the Mughal imperial court. Of less significance at the time, but becoming important later, Sa'adat 'Alī Khān (a younger son of Şhujā' al-Dawla by a different wife) married Afzal Begam, the daughter of another important Irani house; as was appropriate to his slightly lower status, however, his bride did not hold the same rank as that of his elder brother. The daughters of Şhujā' al-Dawla also made strategic marriages to *Shi'ī* notables at the Mughal Court of appropriate birth and political stature. Thus, the ruling family of Awadh continued to ally itself to the other

established *Shī'ī* families at the Mughal center even as it sought to extend its political alliances beyond its own community.

Despite the promise of Āṣaf al-Dawla's marriage, it proved a political and personal failure. Although the marriage remained legally in effect, political relations between the two families turned sour as the bride's father opposed the groom's father and eventually replaced him as *Wazīr* of the Empire. The Irani *Shī'ī* identity of the groom's house and the Turani *Sunnī* identity of the bride's also proved incompatible. Further (but apparently not the prime cause of the later political hostility between the families), *Shams al-Nisā'* claimed that she and Āṣaf al-Dawla never consummated their marriage. Āṣaf al-Dawla was then and is today generally regarded as having been either homosexual or sexually impotent.<sup>15</sup>

When Āṣaf al-Dawla inherited rule in Awadh in 1775, his mother, Bahū Begam, proved an important player in the struggles between the English East India Company and Awadh, in a large measure because she retained much of the late ruler's treasure. To support his struggle for the succession, Bahū Begam gave Āṣaf al-Dawla between four and six million rupees, in exchange for his promise never to demand more, a promise guaranteed by the English Company. Yet he repeatedly demanded and took more wealth from her. Further, as Āṣaf al-Dawla rejected the influence of his mother and grandmother, he abandoned the old capital of Faizabad to them, moving his government to the city of Lucknow, where he built a new and magnificent capital for himself and his friends. Under Āṣaf al-Dawla, the burgeoning city of Lucknow began to flourish as a cultural center for poetic, religious, and other forms of artistic expression. These forms largely combined Persian *Shī'ī* patterns with indigenous Awadh regional ones. As we shall discuss below, the poetry of Lucknow had distinctive features, although the use of the term 'Lucknow School' of poetry would be an oversimplification.<sup>16</sup>

Bahū Begam continued to be politically active in north Indian politics, allegedly supporting the Raja of Benares, Chait Singh, in his insurgency against the English in 1781. In consequence, the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, supported Āṣaf al-Dawla's later seizure of a large amount of her treasure.<sup>17</sup> Hastings's part in this looting of her treasury despite English Company guarantees to her proved one of the key articles in Hastings's impeachment by the English House of Commons and seven-year trial before the



House of Lords. Despite this seizure, Bahū Begam retained much of her treasure until her death in 1815/16. In her will, she entrusted over seven million rupees to the English Company, with the interest and profits to go to her dependents and the *Shī'ī* shrine at Karbala.<sup>18</sup>

#### GENDERED CRITIQUES OF AWADH RULERS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The English East India Company's relations with Awadh and its rulers entered into a state of uneasy alliance following its decisive military victory over *Shujā' al-Dawla* in 1764. Over time, this alliance shifted to a condition of British indirect rule. Many British and Indians used highly gendered grounds for criticism of the Awadh rulers and their court culture. The English Company used these criticisms in order to attempt to justify aggressive British policies toward Awadh. As Petievitch states: "Central to colonial discourse, often made explicit in British correspondence, and certainly illustrated in their interactions with Indian officials, was the assumption that Indians—especially existing Muslim rulers—were morally unfit to continue in office."<sup>19</sup> Many of these British assumptions of moral unfitness used the ruler's sexual relations with women—either an "excess" or a "deficiency" thereof—as their basis.

Most English accounts of *Shujā' al-Dawla* (and many other Indian rulers) stressed his sexual excesses. He allegedly collected 700 wives (through all three types of marriage) plus 2,000 other women in his harem. Following the joint Company-Awadh victory in the Rohilla War (1774), both British and Indian commentators accused him of violating the modesty of one or more of the defeated Rohilla princesses. According to one Indian account from the eighteenth century, *Shujā' al-Dawla* forced a young Rohilla princess

to yield to his licentious desires, but...the violated female, with a soul, the shrine of purity, like that of the divine Lucretia, whose chastity will ever adorn the historic page, fired with indignation at such unmanly treatment, grew frantic with rage, and disdaining life after the loss of honour, stabbed her brutal ravisher with a lancet, which she afterwards plunged into her own bosom, and expired.<sup>20</sup>

Even thus potently wounded, *Shujā' al-Dawla* could not restrain "the impetuosity of his unruly passions...his career was pleasure, to which he gave such a loose rein, that his recent wound opened, and bleeding afresh, reduced him to a state of debility that terminated in his death." Most British accounts took a similarly negative attitude

toward Shujā' al-Dawla's alleged insults to noblewomen's virtue and his unrestrained sexuality.<sup>21</sup>

Many British and Indian critics of Shujā' al-Dawla's successor, Āṣaf al-Dawla, focused on his excessive and 'unnatural' sensual indulgences leading to his 'deficient' sexual relations with women. On his part, Āṣaf al-Dawla denied all charges of his childlessness. Despite testimony of his chief *nikāḥ* wife, Shāms al-Nisā', and others at court about his lack of progeny, Āṣaf al-Dawla nevertheless made repeated public and official assertions that Wazīr 'Alī (r. 1797–98) was his eldest biological son. He arranged the marriage of Wazīr 'Alī to Bānū Begam, the daughter of a Lucknow courtier and thrust him forward as official heir-apparent.

A few months after Āṣaf al-Dawla's death and Wazīr 'Alī's accession, however, the English East India Company, supported by a coalition of courtiers from the Awadh capital, deposed him. Wazīr 'Alī had instituted policies not congenial to the English Company, but it did not officially depose him on those grounds. Rather, the English Company used his alleged illegitimacy as its justification, based on the aforementioned notorious rumors about Āṣaf al-Dawla's sexual incapacity with women.

In Wazīr 'Alī's place, the Company installed as ruler Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān (r. 1798–1814), a younger brother of the late Āṣaf al-Dawla. Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān had been living for two decades in exile under British protection. While in exile, he had been accepted as an approved guest at social functions by British officials and had exhibited a moral character—and political pliancy—more acceptable to the British.

MARRIAGE AND RANK IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY AWADH COURT  
 Unlike the first three Awadh rulers, the rest of the dynasty made itself known for its cultivation of the high arts rather than any accomplishments on the battlefield or in service to the Mughal Empire. By the early nineteenth century, the Awadh ruling house particularly stressed its hereditary status, expressed through the elaboration of its court rituals. Under the ruler Ghāzī al-Dīn Ḥaydar (r. 1814–27), this trend became particularly pronounced. In place of his rank as *Wazīr* of the Mughal Empire—a service relationship (albeit for five decades a nominal one)—he proclaimed himself Emperor in his own right. Given some limited support by the East

India Company for his apostasy toward the Mughal Emperor, Ghāzī al-Dīn Ḥaydar enacted his own coronation as Emperor, *Bādshāh*, in 1819. His imperial claims elevated not only him, but his numerous wives. For example, his premier wife received the new title *Bādshāh* [Empress] Begam.<sup>22</sup>

The dynasty's marriage strategies also changed to reflect its status as hereditary rulers in Awadh. As the British had increasingly isolated Awadh from political intercourse with other Indian rulers, extra-regional political marriage alliances by the dynasty became more difficult to arrange.<sup>23</sup> Male and female relatives of the ruler largely reverted to the more conservative strategy of intra-familial marriage, thus maintaining their own 'purity' as their remote ancestors had done in Iran. Nevertheless, when a branch of the Mughal imperial family took shelter in Lucknow, and accepted a pension from the Awadh ruler, it fell subject to an aggressive political marriage strategy by the Awadh court.

To compel the Mughal imperial house to recognize his new status, Ghāzī al-Dīn Ḥaydar arranged two weddings. First, he compelled the Mughal Emperor's brother, Sulaymān Shukoh (who lived in Lucknow with his family), to provide one of his daughters, Sulṭān Begam, in marriage to the Awadh heir-apparent.<sup>24</sup> Since the Mughal imperial house was thus giving a bride to the Awadh imperial house, none could deny the equality or even superiority of the latter. Second, the Awadh ruler forced a marriage between one of Sulaymān Shukoh's ascriptive daughters and a lower ranked Awadh courtier. Despite the vociferous but vain protests of the Mughal imperial family about these 'highly disrespectful' affronts, these weddings took place.<sup>25</sup> The family of Sulaymān Shukoh, having been used in this way by the Awadh court to demonstrate—through subordinating marriage alliances—the relative inferiority of the Mughal imperial house, was subsequently expelled from Lucknow by his son-in-law, *Bādshāh* Naṣīr al-Dīn Ḥaydar (r. 1827–37).<sup>26</sup>

With the successful conclusion of these marriages with the Mughal imperial house, the Awadh rulers abandoned political marriage alliances as a means for upward mobility. Self-proclaimed Emperors, there was little scope for further enhancement of their status. Ranked first of all the rulers of India—at least in the official lists issued by their own administration—there were no families with whom they could ally to improve their position.<sup>27</sup> Instead they

married within the upper levels of their own courtiers. Conversely, providing a female family member for the Awadh imperial house as a *nikāh*, *muʿah*, or *dolī* wife, or even as a concubine, became a means of obtaining preferment and promotion among the courtiers and townsmen of Awadh.<sup>28</sup>

While some women who married into the Awadh dynasty could wield great power, they largely had to work through the ruler or one of his male relatives, rather than directly in their own name. Further, the British kept the Awadh ruler in a state of dependence on its political representative, the Resident, who monitored and sought indirectly to control virtually the entire Awadh state.

Particularly at liminal times of succession, struggles arose among the various parties in the Awadh royal family as to whose candidate for rule would succeed to the throne. In 1837, for example, Bādshāh Begam attempted to install her putative grandson, Farīdūn Bakht, as ruler. Although her party seized the Hall of Audience and placed her young candidate on the throne, the British used force to expel them. The British asserted that Farīdūn Bakht either was not the late Naṣīr al-Dīn Ḥaydar's biological son, or, even if he were, he was descended from a low-born concubine rather than a *nikāh* wife. Because of Bādshāh Begam's open opposition to the Company, it subsequently sent her and her candidate for the throne, Farīdūn Bakht, into exile.

In place of Bādshāh Begam's candidate, the British installed Muḥammad 'Alī Shāh (r. 1837–42), an elderly brother of her late husband.<sup>29</sup> His chief *nikāh* wife, Jahānārā Begam, had by then lost most of her influence over her aging husband, but she regained some power during the reigns of her son and grandson. After her son, Amjad 'Alī Shāh (r. 1842–47), succeeded to the Awadh throne, Jahānārā Begam—often in alliance with his chief *nikāh* wife, Nawāb Tāj Ārā Begam—determined many of the appointments to the Awadh administration. Together, they ensured the succession of Nawāb Tāj Ārā Begam's favorite son, Wājid 'Alī Shāh (r. 1847–56). Nawāb Tāj Ārā Begam also proved instrumental in arranging this son's first *nikāh* marriage to a woman whom she favored, Nawāb Khas Maḥall [also known as Nawāb Bādshāh Maḥall 'Alam Ārā].<sup>30</sup> Thus, the leading women of the Awadh dynasty wielded much power at court and Jahānārā Begam, as premier wife and then dowager

empress, largely selected their structural equivalents of the next generation.

In the view of most British officials, Wājid 'Alī Shāh embodied the sexual extremes of the Awadh court. Many critical British and Indian reports recounted his vast harem and described how he had a palace full of his concubines, which he named his Parī Khāna, 'House of Fairies.' Indeed, he placed this Parī Khānah for a time under the management of his chief wife, Nawāb Khas Maḥall. Wājid 'Alī Shāh also raised a regiment of female soldiers, for whom he took delight in designing innovative maneuvers.<sup>31</sup> Popular accounts of Wājid 'Alī Shāh attribute to him enjoyment of a series of male sexual fantasies, for instance, he reportedly "climbed up the steps of his bathing pool on the bare breasts of naked maids."<sup>32</sup> In addition to these charges of heterosexual excess, many of these same critics accused Wājid 'Alī Shāh of effeminacy and transvestitism.<sup>33</sup> In 1856, the English Company deposed Wājid 'Alī Shāh on a variety of such charges of personal immorality, as well as alleged incompetence as a ruler.

After the Company forced Wājid 'Alī Shāh out of Awadh and into exile in Calcutta, the British and Indian image of Wājid 'Alī Shāh continued to be dominated by the women of his court. His mother, Nawāb Tāj Ārā Begam, went to London to represent the dynasty's interests before the English Government and the Queen. (She died in Paris on her way to the *Shī'ī* holy city of Karbala in 1858.) Wājid 'Alī Shāh left many of his non-*nikāh* wives behind in Lucknow. One of these, Ḥaḍrat Maḥall, had apparently been a courtesan who then entered Wājid 'Alī Shāh's Parī Khāna. When she bore him a son, Birjīs Qadr, he made her a formal wife, apparently by a *mut'ah* marriage. In 1857, during the bloody insurrection against the British in Awadh, she had her son installed as ruler of Awadh, as a focal point for those opposed to the British.<sup>34</sup> In British vilifications of this insurrection, and in later Indian nationalist glorifications of it, Ḥaḍrat Maḥall stands forth as a leading figure, while Wājid 'Alī Shāh—who protested his loyalty to the British and yet languished in prison in Calcutta during the fighting—became marginalized.

Within the ruling dynasty, therefore, marriage strategies (and the place of women in the dynasty) changed with the status and political situation of the time. Women managed to rise to power

and influence through a variety of means, although *nikāh* marriage proved the most consistently successful. Outside of the Awadh ruler's capital, however, a quite different world developed.

#### THE SEPARATE WORLDS OF THE AWADH COUNTRYSIDE

The cultural world of the Awadh Court and those of the province it ruled shared little in background, composition, or interest. Rural Awadh was dominated by Hindu landholding clans, the vast majority of whom had established themselves in Awadh prior to the arrival of Sa'ādat Khān, the founder of the Awadh line, in 1722.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Awadh was their home long before the Awadh dynasty had even entered the province. Further, the landholders seemed to regard the province as their homeland while the ruling dynasty apparently considered it only a place to locate their court.

The population of the province and that of the court also differed significantly in composition. While *Shī'ites* dominated in the state administration and the court of the capital, they made up an insignificant percentage of the population of the countryside. Excluding *Shī'ites* in the areas around the capitals of Faizabad and Lucknow, they made up less than .2 percent of the population of Awadh according to the earliest census.<sup>36</sup> Conversely, virtually none of the established landholding families of Awadh made their way into the Awadh administration or court. A few administrators, however, used the power of their office to then acquire landholding rights.

Typically, landholders were martial Rajputs or Bhumihar Brahmins. They based their local control on links of kinship to, and traditions of service from, the villagers on their estates. While landholders generally seem to have recognized the sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor (and the delegated authority of his agent, the Awadh *nawāb*) to collect land revenue, landholding rights by no means depended on the support of the Emperor. On the contrary, the annual revenue collection process usually consisted of a recurrent conflict between the landholder and the *nawābī* administration. The quantity of revenue extracted, and the degree of local control exercised by the landholder versus that by the *nawābī* district administration, remained subject to abrasive negotiation between them. Often these issues were decided annually on the basis of armed struggle. A larger landholder, in Awadh called a *ta'alluqdār*, could muster military support from the villages of the estate comparable

in size to that of the administrator charged with revenue collection. A concentrated effort by the provincial administration could dislodge even the largest landholder. Nevertheless, the almost uniform opposition of the *ta'alluqdārs*, the short campaigning season due to the climate, the need to collect just after the harvest, and the tenacity of landholders protected by their tough mud forts surrounded by impenetrable bamboo groves and supported by the neighboring villages all meant that only a few examples could be made each year by the administration. The bulk of the landholders thus escaped direct coercion and could negotiate their payments from a position of strength. As a whole, the landholders maintained an adversarial relationship with the district administration even as they recognized the sovereignty of the Mughal and the authority of his appointed governor.

On their part, the members of the Awadh Court maintained an equal level of antipathy toward the landholders of the province. Landholders rarely ventured into the Awadh capital, fearing they would be held hostage for the payment of their revenue should they do so; conversely, the elite of the city avoided the countryside.<sup>37</sup> Except for armed parties hunting tiger or other game, the courtiers and high officials of Awadh ventured out of the capital only at peril to their lives.<sup>38</sup>

The lack of sympathy or shared cultural identity between the courtiers and the landholders of Awadh generally precluded regular social contact and marriage between them. Only in a few unusual cases, where the landholder made extraordinary efforts to adopt the culture of the capital, did social contact develop. In one of these rare instances, a landholding family which had already converted to the *Shī'ī* branch of Islam sought to participate in the culture of the court. The result was prolonged and destructive warfare between the members of the two cultural worlds. The Raja of Nanpara frequented Lucknow sufficiently to take as his second wife one of the favored courtesans of the city, a woman who had formerly been an intimate of the Awadh Bādshāh himself. On the Raja's death soon thereafter, this younger, *Shī'ī*, wife gathered the support of her old companions in the city to try to take over the estate of Nanpara. The late Raja's senior wife, a *Sunnī*, had the backing of the local administrative staff of the estate and most of the neighboring landholders who united to exclude the forces of the

junior widow. In the period of conflict which ensued, the estate was devastated. Only after a compromise, which pensioned off both widows and placed the estate under an infant relative of the late Raja, was peace restored.<sup>39</sup> Thus, so culturally distant were the two worlds of the court and countryside that even marriage between them resulted in hostility rather than political alliance. The Awadh rulers, and apparently virtually all of their courtiers, shunned marriage connections with the inhabitants of the province they ruled.

#### WOMEN AND THE FEMININE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AWADH HIGH CULTURE

Over the nineteenth century, the English East India Company gradually isolated the Awadh court from involvement in politics outside the state. Further, the English Company intervened repeatedly and often indiscriminately in the internal administration of Awadh. In this context, the Awadh court put much of its energies into religious, literary, and other artistic expressions, often with feminine themes. Both European and Indian commentators, including those sympathetic with the culture of Awadh, collectively condemned this intrusion of feminine patterns as illustrative of the moral weakness of the Awadh ruler and capital.

The Lucknow court made its interpretations of *Shī'ī* traditions the focus of its religious and cultural assertions. Much of this expression came through women or men adopting women's roles or voices. For example, as a way to express devotion to the twelve *Imāms* of their [Twelver] branch of *Shī'ism*, the Awadh dynasty, led by the first Awadh Empress, Bādshāh Begam, created an institution called the *Imām Ṣāhib al-'Asr Čhaī* [Lord Imam of the Age's sixth [day after birth] ceremony]. She commissioned beautiful daughters of *Sayyid* families (hence putative descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad) designated *ačhūtīan* [undefiled ones] to play the part of the mothers of the *Imāms*. They reenacted in full detail the birth of each of the twelve *Imāms*, including the ceremonies which traditionally surrounded the birth of a son in a noble Lucknow family.<sup>40</sup>

Not content with such indirect, sponsored maternity of the *Imāms*, Emperor Naṣīr al-Dīn Ḥaydar (r. 1827–37) "himself played the part of a pregnant woman, sat in the lying-in room and by his demeanour and actions portrayed the pain of childbirth. He then gave birth to an imaginary child for whom the ceremonies of the sixth day after the birth and the ablutions were observed in the



usual way. There were so many of these ceremonies that the King was never free from them throughout the year."<sup>41</sup> Thus, mimicked maternity became a male's means of expression of religious devotion.

The Awadh rulers did not always limit their religious expressions to *Shī'ism*, but rather incorporated regional ones as well. A Hindu devotional performance from Mathura and Braj [regions southwest of Awadh], called *rahas* [mystery play], became particularly popular in Lucknow during the reign of Wājid 'Alī Shāh. In this musical drama, women danced the part of *gopīs* [cowherdresses] who loved the Hindu deity Krishna. Wājid 'Alī Shāh himself reportedly dressed as Krishna and "sporting" with the ladies of his court, dressed as *gopīs*; other elite households in Lucknow then imitated this practice.<sup>42</sup> Wājid 'Alī Shāh also reportedly "danced bejeweled in woman's clothes."<sup>43</sup> Such innovations attracted the condemnation of more orthodox Muslims, as well as the British, both for their heterodox and graphic personifications of the sacred and also for their alleged "effeminacy" and/or heterosexual excesses.<sup>44</sup>

#### WOMEN'S WORLDS

The Awadh capital formed an arena in which a number of women's worlds thrived. Like the ruler's household, these were patrilineal, in which women born there often moved out at marriage and outside women moved in through marriage. Beyond the harems of the Awadh rulers were the households of the upper and middle families, which also largely observed restrictions on *purdah*. Beyond women, only eunuchs, male children, elderly male servants, and male relatives could enter these 'women's spaces.'<sup>45</sup> Such 'curtained off' parts of the household created separate worlds in which women predominated, thereby providing symbolic shelter for women.<sup>46</sup> Various female professionals, artists, and servants linked these women's worlds to the outside, finding careers available to them in which they did not compete with males.

The functioning of these separate worlds can be seen in terms of one form of religious devotion which developed to a peak in Lucknow: the chanting of dirges, *soz-khwānī*, to commemorate the deaths of the *Shī'ī Imām* Ḥusayn and his family at the battle of Karbala. Many elite women, most prominently the Bahū Begam, sponsored such ceremonies during the month of Muḥarram.<sup>47</sup> A number of upper-class women themselves performed these dirges, gaining respect for their devotion and artistry. Further, a class of

female *soz-khwān* emerged who could enter assemblies of respectable women, where male singers could not go.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the restrictions of *purdah*, which excluded men, meant that women who practiced these and other arts had a separate world in which to flourish.

A quite different women's world, strongly associated with Lucknow, was that of courtesans. Courtesans lived in a world in which their female lineages (either biological or artistic) formed the core. Males entered their world as patrons, lovers, servants, musical accompanists, subordinate relatives, or other dependents. This world recruited from among the poorer classes of the countryside and city, as well as from among the children of courtesans. A number of courtesans rose to make themselves famous performers, particularly as singers, dancers, or poets. Some courtesans established themselves as wealthy property owners, but most lived in economic insecurity.

The patronage of the Awadh court encouraged many courtesans to become *Shī'ite*, whatever religious community they had been born into. Further, the *Shī'ī* acceptance of *mut'ah* marriage, which sanctioned serial temporary marriages on a contractual basis for a brief and specified length of time, helped legitimate a courtesan's lifestyle. In many ways, courtesans preserved and developed the culture of the capital, training young men and women in the high arts and modes of comportment.

The world of courtesans had its own ranked internal divisions, organized by *qawm* [ethnicity], *birādārī* [sisterhood], and social class. *Kančanī* women, originally of a nomadic *jātī* from the upper Gangetic plain and the Punjab, reportedly came to Awadh in the time of *Shujā' al-Dawla* and soon became famous as dancers and relatively low-ranked courtesans.<sup>49</sup> Another group of courtesans and singers developed, known as *čūnā-wālī* because some of their founder-mothers sold slaked lime, *čūnā*. One of the highest ranked groups of courtesans were *Nāgarnī* women, originally immigrants from the Gujarat area. Overall, singers and poets (who could retain bodily modesty while performing) tended to rank above dancers (who had to draw attention to their physical artistry) and both above prostitutes (who rented the use of their bodies).

The world of the courtesan was one of the few in which women could function relatively independently from men as owners of property, heads of households, and respected poets and/or artistic performers. While many women were born or forced into this life,

others seem to have entered it relatively voluntarily. Compared to an unhappy or abused life with a husband or in-laws or ostracism as a widow, it represented for some women a career that could offer fame, wealth, and the supportive companionship of other women. Both lesbianism and transvestitism apparently found toleration within this world. There is strong evidence (from a later period) of cultural resistance by courtesans to the men whom they both served and exploited.<sup>50</sup>

#### MALE ARTISTS IN FEMALE IDENTITIES

Many of the men of Lucknow found these women's worlds—from which they were largely excluded except as relatives or servants, or, in the case of courtesans, as lovers and/or patrons—attractive, with the added spice of the forbidden. The female beloved was the stock subject of much poetry, although in the conventions of poetry and the traditions of mystical Islam, God and the beloved were often conflated. Persian-language poetry (whose grammar does not indicate gender) often left suggestively ambiguous whether the beloved was God, or a female or male human beloved. Urdu-language poetry, which became increasingly popular in Awadh over the *Nawābī* period, likewise often left the identity of the beloved ambiguous (either God or a male or female as the object of desire). Thus, the poetry created and popular in Awadh's capital could be interpreted as either highly devotional or highly erotic (either heterosexual or homosexual). Further, not only did poetry and music by men use women and the worlds of women as subjects; in some cases the male artists took on female identities and sought to locate themselves linguistically, culturally, and sartorially within the worlds of women.

These separate worlds of women developed their own vocabularies and idioms. Their form of Urdu was known as *rekhtī*. The relatively few women who became famous as Urdu poets, however, generally tended to adopt the male voice when writing. In contrast, several prominent male poets, well-favored in Lucknow, adopted *rekhtī*, and some costumed themselves in female dress as well, to present life and love as they supposed a woman would.<sup>51</sup>

This use of *rekhtī*, this stress on the world of women by male poets, and the alleged 'effeminate' implications of these for poetic style, all became strongly associated with Lucknow. Actually, many of the poets later identified with Lucknow actually immigrated from elsewhere—attracted by the extensive patronage of the Awadh court.

Mīr Ḥasan (1741–86), originally a poet in Delhi who moved to Lucknow, used women's idioms when women spoke in his *mathnawī* “*Benazīr o Badar-i Munīr*.” Taking this idea further, Sa‘ādat Yār Khān, alias Rangīn, (1756–1834) adopted a woman's persona after he immigrated to Lucknow. He adopted a woman's name, Anvarī, and wrote a *mathnawī*, “*Dilpazīr*,” and many *ghazals* using *rekhtī*. When he recited, he also displayed women's costume and mannerisms. Further, Rangīn allegedly conducted ethnographic field work among courtesans, collecting their distinctive dialect and idioms for use in his poetry.<sup>52</sup> Other poets, including Nawāb Mīrzā Shawq (d. 1871), also deployed women's language in their work. Mīr Yār ‘Alī Khān, alias Jān Ṣāhib (c. 1818–97), was Rangīn's main successor, writing *ghazal*, *wāsokht*, and other forms of poetry in *rekhtī*. As the editor of Jān Ṣāhib's collected works explained:

Whatever befalls women of the highest to the lowest rank, whatever they do, say, or think—all has been related by Jān Ṣāhib. Parental love, affection between brothers and sisters, connubial love and bickerings, the jealousy of the co-wife, the concubine's blandishments, the life of children and their education, household matters and marriage ceremonies, the chit-chat of prostitutes, the treatment of maid-servants and servants, attendance on the sick, mourning the dead, charms, spells, superstitions, clothes, ornaments, knick-knacks, in short, a whole world of things has been drawn upon.<sup>53</sup>

Later literary critics have condemned this excessive focus on the world of women by these Urdu poets, both for what the critics regard as its transvestite tendency and also for its immoral effects on respectable women and men: “If *rekhtī* had refrained from obscenity and immorality and had dealt in ideas of virtue and chastity, the art would have been worth cultivating to a certain extent. But it failed. *Rekhtī* always marched outside the path of culture and moderation and, although it may have added something to the language, it certainly had a harmful effect on morals.”<sup>54</sup>

The so-called ‘Lucknow school of poetry’ actually was not a rigidly distinct school but rather involved certain broad characteristics associated by some literary critics with Lucknow. These characteristics tended to place more emphasis on the female, particularly on the female body and adornments, than on more austere or religious subjects (for which the rival poets of Delhi prided themselves). This Lucknow style also had the reputation of being

more earthy. The female idiom—words and phrases used by women as well as the vocabulary of women's dress and environment—is also associated by these critics with Lucknow. In short, many critics (both Indian and European) denigrate the culture of Lucknow by labeling it 'effeminate.'<sup>55</sup>

Dance forms which flourished in Lucknow also featured women, or men acting in imitation of women. Among the classes of female entertainers were *dōmnī*, *mīrāṭhsnī*, and *jāgnī* women, each of whom developed their own genres. They held established roles in the ceremonial life of Awadh inside the women's worlds, particularly at times of ceremonies like weddings.<sup>56</sup>

While men could not observe all such types of women dancers, they did watch courtesans and other female performers, or men dancing in imitation of females. Troops of Hindu *kathak* and Kashmiri Muslim *bhānd* dancers each featured young men, with long hair and erotic gestures, in their performances.<sup>57</sup> Thus, in Lucknow, the women and the feminine appeared in a number of distinctive cultural roles.

#### CONCLUSION: WOMEN AND THE FEMININE IN LUCKNOW HIGH CULTURE

Women and feminine themes became strongly prominent in the court and high culture of *Nawābī* Awadh. During the long history of their rule over Awadh, the *Nawābs* deployed several marriage strategies. At times of stable social status, the ruling family tended to arrange the marriages of women and men of the family, practicing endogamy to preserve status. When upwardly mobile, the family reached outward, accepting and providing women to other families with whom it sought political alliance. Given the assumptions of hypergamy, each exogamous marriage also ranked the two families involved. Such ranking required complex preliminary negotiations and often difficult consequent inter-family relations, with powerful effects on the bride who left her natal family and entered her in-law's house as a social inferior.

Once married into the *Nawābī* dynasty, some women came to exert significant power, both financial and political, over Awadh and also its relations with the expanding English East India Company. Each wife's type of marriage [*nikāḥ*, *mut'ah*, or *dolī*] strongly determined her status. The most continuously influential women held the status of chief *nikāḥ* wife and managed to make themselves the mother and then grandmother

of succeeding rulers. Functioning from within purdah, these elite women relied both on their personal relationships—particularly as daughter or wife—to the *Nawāb* and also on their extensive household staffs and personal resources.

Quite separate from the world of the Awadh capital was the culture of the countryside. Here, large landholders, mostly Hindus, dominated. They too used marriage ties to link themselves to political allies, both within Awadh and without. Nevertheless, the distinctly *Shī‘ī* character of the Awadh court, and the strong regional traditions of the countryside, as well as their competing political and economic interests, largely separated the capital and the countryside. The relatively few marriages between elite families of the capital and those of the rural areas tended to lead to tension rather than alliance.

Within the Awadh capital, a variety of women's worlds flourished. Purdah tended to create separate households for elite men and women. In the latter, women developed their own rich culture, in which women performers and professionals found careers. Servants linked these women of purdah with the outside world.

Courtesans of a variety of types and statuses also developed a distinctive matrilineal high culture in the Awadh capital. While a few courtesans gained sufficient property to establish their economic independence, most remained dependent on male patrons and audiences, however much they may have resisted cultural domination by men. Out of these elite and public women's worlds, a distinct women's dialect developed, with a vocabulary appropriate to the concerns and material culture of women.

For many of the rulers and artists of Lucknow, the women's worlds proved highly fascinating. Many males oriented their artistic and religious expression around the worlds of women. Further, some men explicitly adopted the language and behavior of women for themselves.

The world of women became highly valorized. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some Indian male writers had described the world of courtesans in sympathetic, albeit romanticized terms.<sup>58</sup> In contrast, many British and Indian critics of the rulers and culture of Awadh condemned it as abusive of women or 'effeminate,' or both. The British used these gendered criticisms to attempt to justify a number of aggressive political policies toward Awadh, culminating in the British annexation of Awadh itself.

After the Company deposed the *Nawābī* dynasty and annexed Awadh in 1856, and then crushed Awadh's violent resistance in 1857, the British determined to transform the province and its capital. They began to rebuild the devastated city in their own image of an Indian provincial capital. They simultaneously shifted control over the wealth of the province away from the old court and placed much of it in the hands of rural landholders. Many of these landholders took over as their urban homes the male and female palaces of the Awadh *Nawābs*.<sup>59</sup> In the face of these fundamental changes, *Nawābī* high culture became a thing and a symbol of a lost past.

After 1857, the former *Nawābī* court in Lucknow lost virtually all its income and power, declining into a remnant of its former status. Many of the royal women and their attendants became impoverished, some became courtesans or prostitutes, serving the new landholding and commercial elite whom they had earlier scorned as uncouth. Yet, many of these new elites, as well as some Britons, romanticized the old *Nawābī* culture as the faded heritage of their city.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast, for those seeking to 'reform' Muslim society, *Nawābī* culture, with its stress on women and the feminine, represented the 'unmanly' moral weakness that had led to the perceived decline of the community.<sup>61</sup> Some Muslim leaders attempted to recast the identity of their community in more 'manly' terms, terms that they and the British could respect. In particular, they attacked the culture of Awadh, as embodied in its rulers and high culture, for a number of excesses: transvestitism, homosexuality, promiscuous heterosexuality, or a combination of any or all of these.<sup>62</sup> For example, Ahmed Ali writes:

The Lucknow of the first decades of the nineteenth century was given to sensuousness and artificiality encouraged by the degenerate nawabs....Orgiastic pleasure and love of abnormal pursuits became the order of the day. Courtesans and courtiers, dancing girls and eunuchs flourished and set the fashions....For the mere thrill the nawabs affected the ways of dancing girls and even feigned childbirth. The conception of love and the beloved was reduced to flirtation with the courtesan or the common prostitute.<sup>63</sup>

Sadiq adds that "Except for arresting the taste for homosexuality, the effect of the popularity of courtesans on the morals of the people was deleterious."<sup>64</sup>

Further, leading Indian artists and writers of the twentieth century have preserved some of the judgments of writers in the colonial

period. Petievitch points to Premchand's story about decadent Lucknow elites, *Shātrānj ke Khilāfī*, and its film version by Satyajit Ray, *The Chessplayers*: "Such reproductions demonstrate that the power of colonial discourse manifests itself in a degree of acceptance, on the part of Indian artists, that substantial aspects of the indigenous culture were indeed decadent and morally suspect..."<sup>65</sup>

Thus, a series of asymmetrical relationships based on gender existed in the Awadh capital. Elite women had their own worlds, largely ones without men except male relatives or servants. Elite men could thus enter such worlds only marginally, but they could more freely enter the worlds of public women. While some elite men adopted female roles, many critics later attacked them for it. In these ways, women and the feminine both played particularly powerful roles in the development of the high culture of Awadh, and further became the criteria by which many British and Indian critics valued or devalued that culture.

#### NOTES

1. G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, 11 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1968), vol. 4, p. 9.
2. For a structural analysis of these landholding clans see Richard Fox, *Kin, Clan, Raja, and Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971). For a survey of the landholders of Awadh and their origin myths see Michael H. Fisher, *Clash of Cultures* (Delhi: Manohar, 1987), pp. 41–49.
3. Imtiaz Ahmad, "Endogamy and Status Mobility among the Siddique Sheikhs of Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh," in *Caste and Social Stratification among the Muslims*, ed. Imtiaz Ahmad (Delhi: Manohar, 1973), p. 182. Afzal Husain, "Marriages among Muslim Nobles as an Index of Status and Aristocratic Integration," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (1972): 307.
4. EI(2), s.v. "Nikāḥ."
5. EI(2), s.v. "Mut'ah."
6. K.S. Santha blames the British for not intervening to protect such women from subsequent Awadh rulers, "The Exploitation of the Begums of Awadh by the East India Company: A Case History of Malika-i Jahan, Secondary Wife of Muhammad Ali Shah," *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* 20, 2–3 (1980–81): 19–25.
7. For studies of the early Awadh line see Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707–1748* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); Muhammed Faiz Baksh, *Tarikh-i Farah Buksh*, trans. William Hoey as *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad* (Allahabad:



North West Provinces and Oudh Government Press, 1888–89); Richard B. Barnett, *North India between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British 1720–1801* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Purnendu Basu, *Oudh and the East India Company, 1785–1801* (Lucknow: Maxwell, 1943); C.C. Davies, *Warren Hastings and Oudh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939); Shaykh Taṣadduq Ḥusayn, *Begamāt-i Awadh* (Lucknow: Kitabnagar, n.d.); Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Awadh* (Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwala, 1933); and *Shuja al Dawlah*, 2 vols. (vol. 1, Delhi: Shiva Lal Agarwala, 1961; vol. 2, Lahore: Minerva Book Shop, 1945); Abu Talib, *History of Asaf'd Dawla*, trans. William Hoey (Allahabad: North West Provinces and Oudh Government Press, 1885). For a fictionalized account of the Awadh court see William Knighton, *Private Life of an Eastern King together with Private Life of an Eastern Queen* (New York: J.S. Redfield, 1856).

8. The laws of marriage are discussed most extensively in Sūra IV of the Qur'ān. See also Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (New Delhi: Oriental Book Reprint, 1976), s.v. "Marriage"; and K.M. Kapida, *Marriage and Family in India*, 3rd. ed. (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 198–216. So prevalent is the patrilineal parallel cousin marriage that, even when she is not in this consanguinous relationship to him, the husband often addresses his wife as "Bint 'Amm," [father's brother's daughter]. See Michael M. Ripinsky, "Middle Eastern Kinship as an Expression of a Culture-Environment System," *Muslim World* 58 (1968): 225–41. In modern Muslim society in South Asia, marriage between cousins does not alter the kinship terminology used. See Veena Das, "The Structure of Marriage Preferences: an Account from Pakistani Fiction," *Man* 8.1 (March 1973): 30–45. For the pre-Islamic marriage practices of India see also Thomas R. Trautmann, "Cross-Cousin Marriage in Ancient North India" in *Kinship and History in South Asia*, ed. Thomas R. Trautmann, Michigan Papers in South and Southeast Asia, No. 7 (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1974), pp. 61–103. Contemporary marriage practices are surveyed in: Mohini Anjum, ed., *Muslim Women in India* (London: Sangam, 1992); Sheikh Abrar Husain, *Marriage Customs among Muslims in India: A Sociological Study of the Shia Marriage Customs* (New Delhi: Stirling, 1976); Patricia Jeffery, *Frogs in a Well: Indian Women in Purdah* (Delhi: Vikas, 1979); Shahida Lateef, *Muslim Women in India: Political and Private Realities* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1990); M. Indu Menon, *Status of Muslim Women in India* (New Delhi: Uppal, 1981); Barbard Daly Metcalf, ed. and trans., *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990); Anita M. Weiss, *Walls Within Walls: Life Histories of Working Women in the Old City of Lahore* (Boulder: Westview, 1992).

9. Husain, "Marriages among Muslim Nobles," p. 309.

10. Muhammed Faiz Baksh, *Tarikh-i Farah Buksh*; K. S[rinivasa] Santha, *Begums of Awadh* (Varanasi: Bharati Prakashan, 1980), pp. 31–60;

- Ikramuddin Qidwai, "The Begams of Awadh and their Establishment," *Pakistan Society Historical Journal* 38 (1990): 324–26.
11. See Richard B. Barnett, "Embattled Begums," in this volume; see also: Ikramuddin Qidwai, "The Begams," pp. 309–24, and Santha, *Begums*, pp. 61–104.
  12. Her brothers and their families once received a total of 786,666 rupees (some £80,000) in annual income from the Awadh ruler. Resident to Governor General, 21 January 1783, Foreign Secret Consultations 11 August 1783, India Office Library, British Library [hereinafter cited as IOL]. For further details about their careers see Bahadur Singh, "Yādgar-i Bahādurī," Persian Manuscript 255, Regional Archives, Allahabad, fol. 593; Harnam Singh, "Tarikh-i Sa'adat-i Jawid," partly translated by Munshi Sadasukh Lal, MS Add. 30786, fol. 42B and MS Add. 29202, fol. 110A-B, British Library, London.
  13. Muhammed Faiz Baksh, *Tarikh-i Farah Buksh*, p. 294; Santha, *Begums*, p. 80.
  14. Shaykh Taşadduq Husayn, *Begamāt-i Awadh*, p. 42; Santha, *Begums*, pp. 202–06.
  15. Muhammed Faiz Baksh, *Tarikh-i Farah Buksh*, pp. 16–18. Resident to Governor General, 12 February 1776, Bengal Secret Consultations 26 February 1776, IOL; see Barnett, "Embattled Begums."
  16. See Carla Petievitch, *Assembly of Rivals* (Delhi: Manohar, 1992).
  17. Both Abu Talib, *History of Asaf ad Dawla*, p. 47 and Santha, *Begums*, pp. 95–96, reported some ten million rupees; Barnett puts the figure much lower (Barnett, "Embattled Begums," chapter 22 in this volume).
  18. A.F.M. Abdul Ali, "The Last Will and Testament of Bahū Begam," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 6 (January 1929): 149–56.
  19. Carla Petievitch, "The Feminine Voice in the Urdu Ghazal," *Indian Horizons*, 39.1–2 (1990): 26.
  20. Dean Mahomed, Letter XXI, reprinted in Michael H. Fisher and Dean Mahomed, *The First Indian Author in English* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 70. This same report, apparently originating from within the Awadh ruler's harem, circulated in Persian *akhbarāt* [newsletters] and contemporary histories, although several British sources question this particular story's veracity, if not the ruler's general sexual excesses. Munna Lal gave the same story, "Ibrat Nama," 25b–26b (Aligarh ms) and "Waqī'at-i Shāh 'Alam," fol. 160, cited in Iqbal Husain, *The Rise and Decline of the Ruhela Chieftaincies in 18th Century India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 173, n. 39; Letter to Patterson, 23 February 1775 in Thomas Deane Pearse, "Memoir," *Bengal Past and Present* 2.3 (1908): 459. Saiyid Ghulam Hossein Khan reported this story as a widely-believed rumor, but discounted its veracity. Haji Mustapha, however, wrote there was much evidence from the women of Shujā' al-Dawla's harem that this account was true. Saiyid Ghulam Husain Khan, *Seir Mutaqherin*, trans. M.

Raymond, 4 vols. (Calcutta: T.D. Chatterjee, 1902 reprint), vol. 4: 60–61 and n. 41. For his part, the Awadh ruler denied all the charges, asserting that a freak windstorm had simply blown down the purdahs [cloth partitions] sheltering the family of Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat, exposing the ladies to public view. Shuja al-Dawla to Governor of Bengal, 28 November 1774, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* 4 (1772–75), no. 442. Captain Macpherson called the violation of this princess “a Report Shocking to humanity, and which had some appearance of truth, tho’ it cannot absolutely be confirmed.” He says nothing about this incident leading to the death of the Awadh ruler. Macpherson in William Charles, ed., *Soldiering in India, 1764–1787; Extracts from the Journals and Letters left by Lt. Colonel Allan Macpherson and Lt. Colonel John Macpherson of the East India Company’s Service* (Edinburgh: William Blackwell, 1928), p. 222. Charles Hamilton says Shujā’ al-Dawla died of a long-standing disorder, Charles Hamilton, *An Historical relation of the origin, progress, and final dissolution of the Rohilla Afghans* (London: K. Keersley, 1787), p. 271. Major Balfour denied the validity of this story, cited in John Strachey, *Hastings and the Rohilla War* (New Delhi: Prabha, 1892), p. 219. George Foster, also reports this rumor about Shujā’ al-Dawla and a Rohilla woman but concluded that it was “not supported by any substantial authority,” George Foster, *Journey from Bengal to England*, 2 vols. (London: R. Faulder, 1798), p. 175–78. More recent historians discount this cause of his death. Richard B. Barnett, *North India* (1980), pp. 93–95; Strachey, *Hastings*, p. 270, n. 1.

21. Warren Hastings, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings, First Governor-General of Bengal, compiled from Original Papers*, ed. G.R. Gleig, 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1841), vol.1, pp. 425–90; Bengal Secret Consultations, 10 October 1776, IOL.

22. Abd al Ahad, *Tarikh-i Badshah Begam*, trans. Muhammad Taqi Ahmad (Allahabad: Indian Press, 1929); Santha, *Begums*, pp. 105–79.

23. From the last quarter of the eighteenth century until the Company annexed Awadh in 1856, it gradually cut the province off from the rest of the world. From 1798, all communications between the Awadh ruler and the other rulers of India or beyond had to pass through the Company’s hands. In 1801, the British forced him to cede half of his territories to the Company, leaving Awadh surrounded on three sides by Company territory and on the fourth by Nepal. By 1853, the Company forced the ruler to withdraw his last diplomatic representative outside of Awadh. C.U. Aitchison, compiler, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sunnads relating to India and Neighboring Countries*, 14 vols. (Calcutta: Foreign Office Press, 1876), vol.2; Resident to King of Oudh, 10 August 1853, India Political and Foreign Consultations, 26 August 1853, No. 52, IOL.

24. Lord Hastings, “Summary of Operations in India,” in Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Papers* (Commons), 1831–32, vol. 8, “Report of the Select Committee,” 4:110; Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥaydar, *Tarikh-i*

*Awadh*, 2 vols. (Lucknow: Nevil Kishore, 1907), vol. 1, pp. 245–46; Resident to Secretary to Government Political Department, 22 December 1821, Bengal Political Consultations [hereafter cited as BPC], 3 January 1822, No. 23; Secretary to Government to Resident, 3 February 1822, BPC, 3 February 1822; King of Oudh to Resident, 9 February 1822, BPC, 5 July 1822, No. 71; Resident to Secretary to Government, 9 September 1823, BPC, 3 October 1823, No. 22; King of Oudh to Resident, 2 Muharram 1239 H., BPC, 3 October 1822, No. 23; King of Oudh to Resident, 2 Muharram 1239 H., BPC, 3 October 1822, No. 23, IOL; Santha, *Begums*, pp. 206–08.

25. Resident to Secretary to Government, 14 May 1824, BPC, 28 May 1824, No. 7. Shooka from King of Delhi to Sir Charles Metcalfe, received 16 January 1826, BPC, 3 February 1826, No. 14; Resident to Secretary to Government, n.d., BPC, 28 March 1826, No. 26; Mirza Soleman Shokoh letter, received 3 July 1828, BPC, 1 August 1828, No. 17, IOL.

26. Resident to Secretary to Government, 20 June 1828, BPC, 1 August 1828, No. 13; Resident to Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department, 20 October 1851, India Political and Foreign Consultations, 19 December 1851, No. 115, IOL.

27. *Lucknow Almanac for the Year 1849* [text in Persian and Urdu, title page also in English], trans. Syed Kumal ooddeen Hyder (Lucknow: H.M. Press, 1849), p. 46.

28. Significantly, the only chief minister who remained in office throughout most of the reign of an Awadh ruler was bound to him by ties of marriage. After a number of unsuccessful negotiations with various of his cousins, the prince who would become the last Bādshāh of Awadh, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (1847–56), married the daughter or niece of ‘Alī Naqī Khān, a courtier and distant relation. After his accession, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh appointed his father-in-law chief minister, despite the man’s almost total lack of administrative experience. In spite of the particularly severe strains placed on this minister by the political circumstances of the day, he remained *wazīr* through the annexation of Awadh by the Company in 1856. Even after the deposition and then the exile of the Awadh ruler, he continued to serve his father-in-law in the post of chief minister.

29. Safi Ahmad, *Two Kings of Awadh: Muhammad Ali Shah and Amjad Ali Shah* (Aligarh: P.C. Dwadash Shreni, 1971).

30. G.D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh under Wajid Ali Shah* (Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1968); Santha, *Begums*, pp. 209–18.

31. See Gavin R.G. Hambly, “Armed Female Retainers in the Zenanas of Indo-Muslim Rulers: The Case of Bibī Fāḡima,” in this volume.

32. Ahmed Ali, *The Golden Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 212–13.

33. Ali, *Golden Tradition*, pp. 212–13.

34. Santha, *Begums*, pp. 227–66.

35. Between 71 and 86 percent of the landholders of Awadh were Hindu; 83 percent claimed to have been established in Awadh prior to 1722. I compiled these figures from Darogha Haji Abbas Ali, *An Illustrated Historical Album of the Rajas and Taaluqdars of Oudh* (Allahabad: n.p., 1880). For a description of the Rajput world-view see John T. Hitchcock, "The Idea of the Martial Rajput," *Journal of American Folklore* 71 (1958): 216–23.

36. Edmond White, *Report on the Census of the N.-W. P. and Oudh and of the Native States of Rampur, and Native Garwhal Taken on the 17th February 1881* (Allahabad: North West Provinces and Oudh Government Press, 1822). The only earlier census did not identify *Shīrites*. J. Charles Williams, *The Report on the Census of Oudh*, 2 vols. (Lucknow: Oudh Government Press, 1869).

37. The rare landholder who did enter Lucknow tried to insure his safety through guarantees from powerful individuals at court. Landholders were beaten, imprisoned, and even killed when found in the capital. Resident to Secretary to Government in the Secret Department, 1 May 1833, Foreign Secret Proceedings, 16 May 1833, No. 2; Resident to Government of India with the Governor General, 23 February 1849, Foreign Political Consultations, 21 April 1849, No. 108, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

38. For a colorful and probably fictionalized account of the loot of a party of nobles from Lucknow by local landholders see Knighton, *Private Life*, pp. 76–78.

39. Benod Chandra Goshal, *Some Notes on Raj Nanpara or the Tragic Story of the Premier Mohamedan Estate in Oudh* (Lucknow: Anglo-Oriental Press, 1819). Resident to Secretary to Government, Foreign Department, 6 February 1855, India Political and Foreign Consultations, 28 December 1855, No. 307, IOL.

40. Abdul Halim Sharar, *Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* (London: Paul Elek, 1975), p. 55.

41. Sharar, *Last Phase*, p. 57; Muhammad Sadiq, *History of Urdu Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 118.

42. Sharar, *Last Phase*, p. 146.

43. Ali, *Golden Tradition*, pp. 212–13.

44. About Naṣīr al-Dīn Ḥaydar, Sadiq wrote "effeminate by nature, he spent his time in the company of women, and talked and dressed like them," Sadiq, *History*, p. 118. Sharar concurs that Naṣīr al-Dīn Ḥaydar, "through living continuously with women, had become so effeminate that he spoke like a woman and dressed like a woman," Sharar, *Last Phase*, p. 57.

45. For an early nineteenth-century account of life within an elite Muslim family in Lucknow by a European woman who married into it, see Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India*, 2 vols. (London: Parbury Allen, 1832).

46. Hannah Papanek and Gail Minault, eds., *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia* (Columbia, Mo.: South Asia Books, 1982).
47. Sharar, *Last Phase*, p. 148.
48. Ali, *Observations*, vol. 1, pp. 51–52.
49. Sharar, *Last Phase*, pp. 145–46.
50. Veena Talwar Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India," *Feminist Studies* 16.2 (Summer 1990): 259–87.
51. Sharar, *Last Phase*, p. 87.
52. Sharar, *Urdu*, pp. 140–42.
53. Sayid Muhammad Mubin, *Tazkira-e-Rekhtī Ma-e Dīwan-i Jān Šāhib* (Allahabad: n.d.), pp. 59–60 cited in Sadiq, *History of Urdu Literature*, p. 143.
54. Sharar, *Last Phase*, pp. 87–88.
55. See Petievich, *Assembly*, pp. 14, 84–85.
56. Sharar, *Last Phase*, p. 145.
57. Sharar, *Last Phase*, pp. 141–43.
58. See Mirza Muhammad Rusva *Umrao Jan Ada, Courtesan of Lucknow*, trans. Khushwant Singh and M.A. Husaini (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, n.d.); and Hasan Shah, *Nashtar*, trans. Qurratulain Hyder (New York: New Directions, 1993).
59. See Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856–1877* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) and Thomas R. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords, and the British Raj: Northern India in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California, 1979).
60. See Sharar, *Last Phase* and Attia Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (New York: Penguin, 1988).
61. See Metcalf, *Perfecting Women*.
62. Petievitch, "Feminine Voice," pp. 26–27.
63. Ali, *Golden Tradition*, pp. 212–13.
64. Sadiq, *History*, p. 121.
65. Petievitch, "Feminine Voice," p. 27.



## EMBATTLED BEGAMS: WOMEN AS POWER BROKERS IN EARLY MODERN INDIA

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*Some women in early modern Indian regimes wielded genuine political and social power. The Begams of Awadh (north India) are a case-study in leadership-roles.*

The literature on women's history of colonial and post-colonial India continues to grow rapidly, enriched by wide-ranging methodological and theoretical debates.<sup>1</sup> The overwhelming majority of these works focus entirely on the modern era. The student of late pre-colonial India, however, does not enjoy such a developed literature, since the problematics, assumptions, and even source materials are not only situationally different, but far less familiar.<sup>2</sup> Vast realms of instructive information on women await exploration within the usual eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century topics such as regional regimes, political and economic re-formulation, cultural re-definition and creativity, military adventurism, and resistance to the insistent *imperium* of the new European presence. Although we may safely assume that early modern history is just as gendered as colonial and post-colonial, there is no consensus on its configurations, or how it constrained or emancipated its women actors. In contrast either to the highly questionable stereotype of the Golden Age of Gender Equality in Vedic India, or to that of the assertive, professional or owning-class reformers of the colonial period, the view of women in the eighteenth century seems limited to two extremes: either they were brazen courtesans, or voiceless, unseen nonentities rustling within the latticed corridors of the zenana, the women's quarters.

We seek a contextualized, de-romanticized view of women and their roles in the period between empires. What follows is thus meant as a partial and tentative assessment of roles that a few women



managed to play during this immensely formative period. This was a time when, although Indian political autonomy was no doubt eroding, Indian elites outside British territories still enjoyed a great deal of cultural, political, and psychological autonomy, within which many millions of Indian women were testing not only the changing limits on their power and selfhood, but ways to expand and even transcend these limits. I will focus on several women power-brokers in Awadh, in the central Gangetic plains. Their roles were, as we shall see, fascinating, but not necessarily typical. Early modern India had dozens if not hundreds of women power-brokers, in as many distinct circumstances with as many unique resources at their disposal.

#### THE AWADH BEGAMS, 1764–1815

Warren Hastings was Governor-General of India from 1772 to 1784, and was later impeached by the House of Commons on charges of abuse of power. The bill of impeachment had four articles; three of these articles had directly to do with his dealings in Awadh, north India's most powerful state, and the most controversial one involved the Awadh Begams, whom Hastings was accused of 'plundering.' I mention Hastings and the trial only to note the international importance of these women; we will avoid the trial itself because it grew out of internal British politics and the birth-pangs of empire rather than accurate information. The charge that Hastings had exceeded his authority in dealing with the begams prompted Richard Sheridan, MP, to make what is still regarded as the most eloquent speech ever delivered to the House of Commons. Needless to say, it is not regarded as the most accurate.

The two noble women known as "*The Begums of Awadh*"—although there were several others until the state was annexed in 1856—were not only *sharīf*, noble, but closely connected to the increasingly powerless but highly respected Mughal court in Delhi. One was Ṣadr al-Nisā' Begam, the daughter of Sa'ādāt Khān, Awadh's dynastic founder. She was also the only widow of Safdar Jang, his successor, and the mother of Shujā' al-Dawla, who ruled Awadh from 1754 to 1775. The other was popularly known as Bahū Begam [Daughter-in-Law Begam], Shujā''s favorite wife and daughter of the Irānī Mughal noble Ishāq Khān Najm al-Dawla. Her wedding to Shujā' in 1745 was the single most expensive Mughal ceremony

in the history of the Empire, costing half again as much as the wedding of Shāh Jahān's favorite son, Dārā Shukoh.<sup>3</sup> Although they did not always agree, they enjoyed not only status, but considerable economic and political power. Bahū Begam's skills as a power-broker recall those of another great Irānī dowager, Jahāngīr's consort Nūr Jahān. Bahū Begam was tactful, intelligent, self-aware, and experienced in advising her male relatives, and she overcame her illiteracy by developing a large administrative apparatus in Faizābād, then the capital of Awadh, commanded by two able eunuchs from the harem.<sup>4</sup>

Shujā' deeply trusted his wife, and when heading off to fight the British at the battle of Baksar in 1764, he entrusted much of his treasury, and his official seal, to her custody. After narrowly losing at Baksar, and being reinstated as *nawāb* by the British, Shujā' continued to remit the annual revenue surplus to Bahū Begam, probably because she was his most trustworthy ally. She personally paid much of the British war indemnity after Baksar, which cost some two million rupees, or about £200,000.<sup>5</sup>

Ten years later, in 1775, Shujā' died, naming as successor his eldest son, Āṣaf al-Dawla. A pampered, lazy, impulsive, crude, and wilful youth, Āṣaf was supported by his mother, Bahū Begam, even though in his first few years he was manifestly unfit to rule, especially compared to his half-brother, Sa'ādat 'Alī. Bahū Begam, whose only son he was, supported Āṣaf through numerous challenges to his rule, the most serious from Sa'ādat 'Alī. He was also widely known to be sexually impotent, and thus unable to produce heirs. His marriage in 1770 to a prominent Tūrānī woman was accordingly unhappy and empty, and after one pathetic night—satirized shamelessly by one historian who was no friend of Āṣaf<sup>6</sup>—she retired to the obscurity of the late Shujā''s harem. Indeed, Āṣaf was widely regarded as an odd duck. In the words of the British Resident at Faizābād,

It is not that the Nabob's State of Health in the least makes me apprehensive of his Death at the present Juncture, yet owing to his amazing Corpulency and as by his former mode of life he is totally debited with respect to Women. The possibility of Heirs unless his Constitution should take some very extraordinary Turn is precluded by the latter circumstance, and by the former we have great Reason to think him liable to a sudden Death.<sup>7</sup>

The treasury controlled by Bahū Begam was twenty million rupees, or about two million pounds sterling.<sup>8</sup> Let us state clearly that this was neither her property, nor hers to control by right. It was mainly state property, intermingled with her earnings. These earnings derived from agrarian tax-free revenues, market taxes, and control of the Faizābād and Ayudhya mints. Together with their male relatives living in Awadh and Delhī, both begams held six percent of the total land revenues of the state, and one-third of all *jāgīrs* (land holdings).<sup>9</sup> Everyone acknowledged that the begams would not surrender this largess without considerable dealing. For her part, Bahū Begam knew that, as a Muslim widow, she could neither spend it conspicuously, nor even give it away. Power lay, for her, precisely in keeping it as long as possible from others who could threaten her status. She and her mother-in-law thus became one of three roughly equivalent power groups in Awadh, along with the *nuwwāb*'s court and the East India Company, the latter continuing to nibble away at the resources of the realm through the subsidiary alliance.

Āṣaf's heedless rule, which early on resulted in the cession of Banaras to the British, soon alienated most of the old aristocracy and his mother; his new appointees, partially in reaction, urged him to abandon Faizābād and make Lucknow his capital.<sup>10</sup> He was perfectly happy to be away from her, and from then on had no occasion to show any cordiality or affection, even during his brief formal visits. He knew she wished to have the vigorous and assertive rule of his father maintained, and he also knew *she knew* that he was not up to the task. The begams' position and influence survived even during an almost successful coup attempt by Sa'ādāt 'Alī, which resulted in the retirement or emigration of most of the old military nobility, and the vigorous intervention of the British to keep Āṣaf, a compliant puppet, on the throne. The begams knew that their main political resource was status, which they effectively used to avoid surrendering their other great possession, the treasure. In exchange for handing over about three percent of it in the crisis that led to the coup attempt, they extracted an explicit pledge from the British that the rest would remain untouched in their hands. Their influence extended throughout north India, where aging notables, especially elite women, embodied traditional values and exemplified proper moral attitudes.

THE BEGAMS' VIOLENT ROLE IN THE REVOLT OF CHAIT SINGH, 1781  
 Āṣaf's mother and grandmother remained in Faizābād when he moved his capital in 1776 to Lucknow. By retaining most of Shujā's treasure, and using it and their guaranteed *jāgīrs* to build their own patronage networks, they developed a rival center of power in north India, and made politics in Awadh a three-way affair, the other two parties being the *nawāb* and the Company.

They got a chance to strike a blow for autonomy in 1781, when Hastings, desperate for resources to fight the French and Mysore, abruptly levied a large tribute on the Mahārājā of Banaras, Chait Singh, who reacted by rebelling. Not only was this newly-ceded tract close to the begams' main land-holdings, but one of Hastings's favorites, Major Hannay, had secretly taken over the revenue farm of Gorakhpur in eastern Awadh. His rapid and violent intrusion into the increasingly profitable timber-market had disrupted the begams' activities there, and they welcomed the chance to do what Āṣaf would never have been able or willing to do, namely take the fight to the British themselves.

In 1779, Major (later Colonel) Alexander Hannay, an old up-country hand and favorite of Governor-General Warren Hastings, who had also been active in opening up Awadh to British influence, had received an illegal assignment from his patron. He was allowed to manage the large districts of Gorakhpur and Bahraich together as a revenue farm, one of eighteen such *ijāras* in *nawāb* Āṣaf al-Dawla's realm. In revenue, it was the fourth-largest *ijāra*, with a *jama*, or revenue assessment, of RS 220,000. Territorially, however, it was by far the largest in the entire state, being twice the extent of any other revenue unit. The *nawāb* had objected to this arrangement, to the point of sending his own agent to manage this forest tract, but Hastings forced the issue and had Hannay "reinstated."<sup>11</sup> This was so utterly contrary to Company policy—it was a double-edged fraud, in fact, of the Company as well as the *nawāb*—that Hastings enforced an official silence on all parties to the arrangement. The wording of the contract includes the sentence, "This is a private arrangement and must not in any case be referred to the Supreme Council [of Calcutta]."<sup>12</sup> Thus was a highly profitable and conveniently isolated post severed from the *nawāb*'s patronage network and placed under the Governor-General, who acknowledged the fact two years later when he dismissed Hannay

after the begams had rendered him unable to assist in quelling Chait Singh's revolt. Quoting a later communication from Hastings, who was by then beginning to have much to fear from a critical and financially pressed directorate:

I was resolved to reform it [*i.e.*, the Company presence in Awadh]. I made no distinction for my own friends [in stopping the abuses]. Hannay was particularly mine. His recall was abrupt, and peculiarly marked with the Hardship of its being done at the point in which he was surrounded by Multitudes, and in danger of instant death.<sup>13</sup>

One of our sources in the confrontation over what Hannay had been doing in Gorakhpur is an observant eyewitness named Abū Tālib Iṣfahānī, who was one of Hannay's chief agents.<sup>14</sup> Although a firm partisan of Hannay, he confirmed that his patron used the revenue farm to "amass money," largely by means of rapid escalation of harvesting practices, enforcing strict collection schedules, and monopolizing local trade networks through the command structure of his regiment in the second brigade of the Bengal Army.<sup>15</sup> We also have the Governor-General's own published defence of his response to the crisis, which contains many excerpts from letters written by the perpetrators and targets of the revolt, as well as his own rationale for making and executing policy on the spot.<sup>16</sup>

With his network of hired enforcers, both to protect his burgeoning logging camps and to intimidate ratepayers to be prompt and forthcoming, Hannay managed in less than two years to increase the value of his annual lease from RS 220,000 to RS 350,000, or by 59 percent. This figure should be understood as the amount he was willing to pay the *nawāb's* treasury in order to keep his revenue farm; his actual proceeds from such trade, as new colonial cities needed to be built down river, making heavy use of excellent hardwood timber, would have increased by much more.<sup>17</sup>

Let us be clear that the revolt against Hannay was part of a larger revolt against British interference in east Awadh, led by Mahārājā Chait Singh of Banaras, who was reacting with violence to the extortions of a cash-hungry Hastings. Rushing to support the Mahārājā were Āṣaf al-Dawla's estranged mother and grandmother in Faizābād. Under their direct influence, and assisted by surreptitious payments, *zāmīndārs*, village headmen, tribesmen, and cultivators alike rose up against the excesses of Hannay's timber-harvesting operation in Gorakhpur.

The cause they chose was widely accepted as just and necessary. News of Hannay's methods spread well beyond Awadh; as one Company employee wrote to his father, "...the cruelties acted in Gorakhpur will for ever be quoted to the dishonour of the British name."<sup>18</sup> Hannay's notoriety was such that it was given as a negative example of British interference in James Mill's *The History of British India*.<sup>19</sup> After the revolt, when the *nawāb* had been misinformed that Hannay was on his way back into Awadh, he cast aside his normal meek epistolary style to Hastings and wrote as follows: "If, by means, any matter of this country dependent on me should be entrusted to the Colonel, I swear by the Holy Prophet that I will not remain here, but will go from hence to you. From your kindness, let no concern dependent on me be entrusted to the Colonel."<sup>20</sup> At the time he wrote this, he had no idea that his female relatives had already underwritten Hannay's downfall.

As Nathaniel Middleton, Resident at Lucknow, observed when reporting the revolt to Hastings (then holed up in Chunar Fort, after barely escaping from Banaras itself), of all the British officers preying on the bounty of the *nawāb's* realm, as opposed to those in Banaras itself, it was Hannay whom the rebels attacked first, coming by tens of thousands against Hannay's beleaguered force as various parts of it retreated across the Ghāgara River to the safety of Tanda and thence to Faizābād.<sup>21</sup> Hannay himself, once there, found it not only impossible to send any military support to the besieged Governor-General in Chunargarh, but impossible even to communicate with other parts of the entire southeastern half of Awadh. Those officers he did contact attempted to join him, but according to Abū Tālib, "each of these officers who crossed the river was plundered and killed," and, when Hannay attempted to rally his remaining forces for a relief of Chunar, his own non-commissioned officers had become so disaffected that Abū Tālib himself was cut off and surrounded for nineteen days by rebels whose numbers he estimated, probably with self-serving hyperbole, at 50,000.<sup>22</sup> Frantic and isolated in Faizābād, Hannay related how further rebel recruitment was going on in broad daylight, how Company employees were refused provisions in the marketplace, how the postal system was so compromised that multiple copies of all communications had to be sent by different routes, and how

it is the general belief of every man in this part of the country, that the conduct I have related, is a concerted plan for the extirpation of the English. *The people who are daily sent to him* [Chait Singh], *horse and foot, from Fyzabad*, and the seat of rebellion I have before named [between the Ghagra and Gandak Rivers] is *very great*. The *Begums* have *almost themselves* recruited for him. The old Begum does, in the most open and violent manner, support Chait Singh's rebellion and the insurrection; and the Nabob's mother's accursed eunuchs, are not less industrious than those of the Burra [elder] Begum.<sup>23</sup>

In Gorakhpur district, at least, it seems to have been an uprising involving all ranks of society, and supported by the majority of the rural populace. Hannay had seemed bent on treating his *ijāra* or revenue farm as private property, as a source of maximum profit by any means necessary, not the least of which was an openly declared monopoly on timber, routine intimidation of village headmen, floggings, and even an occasional mutilation.<sup>24</sup> The rebels are referred to repeatedly in Company records as Gongwāllās—that is, *gaonwāllās* or villager cultivators—indicating that the rebellion had assumed overtones of a full-blown agrarian revolt against Hannay's and others' revenue-collecting and trading methods. An employee of the begams in Faizābād, while discounting the begams' obvious role as their co-sponsors, wrote derisively of the rebels: "a complete change came over the common folk, who are no better than cattle. Wherever the villagers saw a red-coated regular, they harried him."<sup>25</sup> The begams, it seems, were prefiguring in their own small way the events of 1857. Although their resources were severely limited, they were committing their status and their treasure, mobilizing resistance to injustice across an impressively large communications-network almost the size of Scotland. Perhaps most importantly, these secluded women were exercising the power that many of their countrymen had long wished the *nawāb* would use.

The rebellion, after seven violent weeks, was crushed in October by relief detachments of Company troops, in keeping with the terms of the subsidiary alliance that had been negotiated with the *nawāb*. But even Hastings had thought, from time to time during his month cooped up in Chunar Fort, that he and his small force were doomed. One can now visit the rooms in which he stayed, which are marked by commemorative plaques, on a short day-trip from Banaras. Hannay eventually made his way to the relative safety of Lucknow,

once the road from Faizābād was secured.<sup>26</sup> But a furious Hastings not only recalled him and stripped him of all authority, but removed all British personnel and commercial influence from Gorakhpur and Bahraich. Hannay, utterly without patronage or further career prospects, despondently retired to Calcutta, where he soon hanged himself.<sup>27</sup>

#### BRITISH RETALIATION: THE 'PLUNDER' OF THE BEGAMS

The British response to the begams' massive show of resistance was the resumption of their tax-free grants of land, and the attempt to seize the sizeable assets, in cash and kind, that they had held for almost two decades. For his part, Āṣaf was by now quite ready to participate in this retribution, although he wished such a catharsis to be blamed on the Company. He agonized and prevaricated over every move in the direction of a direct takeover of the begams' holdings, limiting himself to threats while balking at his own minister's violent schemes. After months of delay, during which time the *nawāb's* hesitancy to achieve more than a paper transfer caused Hastings to send in another army to force Āṣaf's hand, both the Awadh and Company armies marched into Faizābād, dispersing its soldiery without firing a shot.

But all involved knew that the persons of the two women could not even be approached threateningly, much less confined. The targets were instead the two eunuchs, who were imprisoned, but not tortured. Their opium was withheld, however, and within a week the limited amounts they controlled—RS 550,000 or about £55,000—were in the *nawāb's* hands. They were then kept in confinement, although well treated, for an entire year of largely fruitless negotiations among the British military commander, the Resident, the *nawāb*, and of course the begams. In this prolonged period of testing and turmoil, even the British participants seem to have been cowed by the status these women enjoyed.

At last an agreement secured the eunuchs' freedom and the withdrawal of Faizābād's occupation forces, at the cost to the begams of RS 450,000, and to the eunuchs of another RS 50,000, or about £50,000 total.<sup>28</sup> This did not represent much of a hardship to anyone in Faizābād. In the words of an eyewitness, the money and valuables surrendered to the *nawāb* (and immediately turned over to the Company to pay arrears on the subsidy) did not even come from Awadh, but were some of the resources which *Shujā'* had confiscated



from the deposed *nawāb* of Bengal, Qāsim 'Alī Khān, just prior to the battle of Baksar. Compared to what Hastings could have had, or to what he wanted, neither the begams nor the eunuchs were inconvenienced much at all:

even during their imprisonment Jawāhir 'Alī Khān had twelve elephants, thirty horses, and one hundred servants, and Bahār 'Alī Khān [the other eunuch] had a like establishment. The only difference was that the sepoys [local troops] were scattered, and some ten or twenty friends were deprived of their monthly salaries, and received only their evening meals.<sup>29</sup>

The Resident, Nathaniel Middleton, an old India hand and Hastings's special envoy to Lucknow, explained to his furious patron that the *nawāb* seemed satisfied with the outcome of this confrontation, and wished no further harm to come to his highly respected female relatives. Greater violence was not at all likely to produce greater results, since to despoil the begams entirely would have destroyed their large role in the revenue-paying hierarchy, and furthermore would have alienated much of the political network in northeast Awadh that had already revolted once in favor of Chait Singh. In sum, he wrote, "No further rigor than that which I exerted could have been used against females in this country, to whom there can be no access."<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, the *nawāb* himself soon faced the annihilation of his remaining power in Awadh, as Hastings replaced Middleton with the truculent John Bristow, and tried through the latter to govern the realm for the Company's fiscal benefit. In a remarkable display of widespread passive resistance, launched soon after Āṣaf visited the begams and promised to restore their *jāgīrs* (since he now needed them as allies), all official functions came to a standstill the moment Bristow gained access to the state accounts and the state seal.<sup>31</sup> The *nawāb*, desperate for allies, visited Faizābād and promised to restore the begams' *jāgīrs*. After prolonged failure by the Company to squeeze more money and land out of the state of Awadh, not only was Bristow recalled, but Hastings went himself to Lucknow to renegotiate the relationship between Awadh and the British, in terms highly favorable to the former. The begams had succeeded throughout in keeping their power and fortune intact.

Āṣaf died in 1797, after naming his adopted son, Wazīr 'Alī, as heir. Wazīr 'Alī, who had been purchased before birth from a Muslim

family of carpet-spreaders,<sup>32</sup> was the highly bellicose and outspoken focus of an anti-British coalition, including both begams, until four months later when Āṣaf's brother, Sa'ādat 'Alī, was led out of confinement in Banaras and forcibly installed as *nawāb* by the Governor-General, Sir John Shore.<sup>33</sup> The terms dictated to poor Sa'ādat 'Alī at this juncture were the basis for the annexation of half of Awadh in 1801 by Wellesley.<sup>34</sup>

There remains the issue of the disposition of the begams' holdings during their senior years, and at their deaths. The older begam, Ṣadr al-Nisā' Begam, died in 1796 at the age of about seventy, whereupon her chief eunuch, Matbū' 'Alī *Khān*, immediately distributed her entire moveable wealth among her mourners and friends, leaving nothing for the British or the Lucknow court to take or tax.<sup>35</sup> Bahū Begam continued at the center of a vast patronage network, employing more than ten thousand people. When Āṣaf died the following year, her sincere lamentations at his bedside and graveside were followed by her swift seizure of most of his animals and moveable property, which she took back with her to Faizābād in the confusion of Wazīr 'Alī's reign. Having failed to ensure the continued rule of Āṣaf's adopted son, she then waited for Sa'ādat 'Alī to make his peace with her. But he insolently snubbed her requests for more tax-free revenues, and showed nothing but disrespect. She declared to the Resident, John Lumsden, in a highly unusual personal interview that was a major departure from the etiquette observed by *nawābī* widows, that her property should be put in the form of a Company-guaranteed will. This would include endowments for her tomb, provisions for her closest dependents, and a large gift to the holy *Shī'ī* shrine at Karbala, in Irāq.<sup>36</sup>

The Company thus fortuitously received cash and redeemable goods worth RS 71,00,000—about £710,000—when she eventually died in 1816, at the age of eighty-eight. Her Faizābād power-network vanished utterly, but without ever having succumbed to the demands from Lucknow for any share of *Shujā'*'s treasure.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Sa'ādat 'Alī's successor, *Ghāzī* al-Dīn, vigorously asserted his right to the treasure, but the Company was not about to surrender it.<sup>38</sup> On the face of it, this transaction might seem gratuitous, eccentric, or senile. But she had seen how easily her mother-in-law's, and then her late husband's, treasures had been carried off, and knew that a will under English law was the only way to secure a competency for her

dependents, a fund to build her tomb, and a *Shī'ī* religious endowment at Karbala. It would also prevent the dissipation of her life's main claim to fame among those elements of Awadh's polity which had tried to make her widowhood so miserable, and which would have met none of the will's conditions. Illiterate old lady that she was, she still had the clarity and foresight to approach even her former enemies if they could preserve her legacy.

#### CONCLUSION: VEILED POWER IN AWADH

A few generalizations emerge from our brief narrative of these two women. First, they definitely transcended the prescribed boundaries of gender in pre-colonial Indo-Islamic society, with a degree of creativity and elegance that their male chroniclers could report only in amazement. Operating both in concert with powerful male relatives—as was the case when *Shujā'*, even in defeat, was still in control of his realm—and in the vacuum left by the incompetence and powerlessness of his successors, they continually were able to act in not only their own best interests, but in what seemed reasonably to them to be the interests of the state. Their power was outside both the *sharī'a* and the customary law of Indo-Muslim political culture. Although their most constant nemesis was the British beyond the Karamnasa river to the east, the very presence of Company power added to theirs, by virtue of the *nawāb's* sullen realization that most of what he could take from them would end up in British pockets anyway.

Second, whereas the begams did cross gender boundaries in the exercise of their power, they utilized their status as women as a powerful resource. They never violated *parda* until the very end of the century, preferring to stay hidden in the *zenana*, behind closed doors and drawn curtains. No unrelated intact male saw their faces; descriptions of their appearances are utterly absent from the chronicles; no painter ever captured them in the thousands of art works commissioned in Awadh by Indians and Europeans alike during this period.<sup>39</sup> The *adab*, or etiquette, of society demanded that they remain confined, and in their confinement they ruled a state within a state, their rampart consisting of an unquestioned moral code rather than brick and stone. *Parda* was a political resource during Hastings's invasion of Faizābād to seize their assets; the price either the *nawāb* or the British commander would have had to pay

for violating it was too horrible to contemplate. When Bahū Begam finally did come out from behind the veil, it was to negotiate her will with the British Resident, which because it represented her entering another moral universe had to involve, however temporarily, the symbolic abandonment of the old.

Third, their actions as power-brokers sent definite signals to other political and social players, both Indian and foreign. They resisted the foolhardy and heedless doings of Āṣaf, thus helping to check and even tutor him. They resisted, with much violence, the British attempt to inject a rapacious capitalist ethos into the Gorakhpur area. They helped expel the British Resident who tried to take the reins of power into his own hands. They preserved for a long time, and with a high level of managerial skill, their own segment of the segmentary Awadh polity. All these episodes of their 'standing forth' as power-brokers not only postponed the British takeover of north India's richest realm, but convinced the Company that a more successful form of colonial rule would be an indirect one, utilizing what Company officials came to call India's "natural leaders" and based on more accurate information than had at first been available. After their experience in Awadh, the British approached other targeted regional states much more circumspectly.

Finally, how are the begams treated in the history and literature of the period? In virtually all the Persian and Urdū sources, they are depicted matter-of-factly as rational actors responding to challenges. There is very little male shame involved, no Jeremiads about gender boundaries, no rhetoric about a crisis of masculinity. It seems that the writers of an India in crisis coolly accepted *heroinism* as a welcome complement to heroism, even though both were seen to be in short supply when faced with the overwhelming power of the encroaching *farangī*. The Urdū poetic genre of the *shāhr-i āshob*, or 'ruined city,' is not totally free from accusations that men, as humans in great distress, are weak, but gender guilt as such is absent from the contemporary source materials.<sup>40</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Examples: K. Sangari and S. Vaid, *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989); K. Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed, 1986),

'Introduction,' pp. 1–24; Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993); Rehana Ghadially, *Women in Indian Society: A Reader* (New Delhi: Sage, 1988); see also the journals *Manushi* and *The Journal of South Asian Women's Studies*.

2. One major exception is Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, eds., *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to the Present*, vol. 1: *600 BC to the early Twentieth Century* (New York: Feminist Press, CUNY, 1991), pp. 1–64. See also Anju Kapur, "Theorizing Women Writing in India," *South Asia Bulletin* 16 (1994): 114–21; Barbara Ramusack, "From Symbol to Diversity: The Historical Literature on Women in India," *South Asia Research* 10.2 (Nov. 1990): 139–57.

3. A.L. Srivastava, *Shūja-al-Dawla*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Delhi: Shiva Lal Agarwala, 1961), vol. 1, p. 6.

4. Muḥammad Faiz Bakhsh, *Tārīkh-i Farahbakhsh* 1818, trans. William Hoey as *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad* (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces and Oudh Government Press, 1889), vol. 2, pp. 123ff.

5. Bakhsh, p. 19.

6. Harcharan Dās, *Chahār Gulzār-i Shujā'ī 1786–87*, British Library, Or 1732, fol 199B.

7. Bristow to Council 2 March 1775, *Foreign Department Secret Consultations* [hereafter FDSC] 3, 20 April 1775.

8. Tasadduq Husain, *Begumāt-i Awadh* (Lucknow: Kitab Nagar, 1956), 35; here I accept the eighteenth-century convention that £1.00=RS 10.

9. Abstract Revenue Account, 1780, and Jagir List, 1780, in Purling to Council 30–4–80, FDSC(A), 22–6–80, reprinted as Bengal Secret Consultations, 22–6–80, appendix 23, India Office Records, Parliamentary Branch Collection, no. 16.

10. Bakhsh, pp. 18–24.

11. National Archives of India [NAI], Select Committee Letter Received [SCLR], 1771–72 (165); Secret Department Records [SDR], 9 May 1774, 7(b); SDR, 3 Feb. 1777 (7); SDR, 16 Jan. 1781 (4,5); Rājā Gobind Rām to Āsaf ud-daula, 11 Aug. 1779, received at Fort William 3 Dec. 1779, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* [CPC], vol. 5, p. 391, no. 1692(1); Hastings to Āsaf, 26 Apr. 1780, CPC, vol. 5, p. 439, no. 1846.

12. "Copy of an agreement between the Nawab and Major Hannay," CPC, vol. 5, p. 377, no. 1641, received at Fort William 13 Oct. 1779.

13. Hastings to Macpherson, 12 Dec. 1781, quoted in *Warren Hastings' Letters to Sir Henry Macpherson*, ed. Henry Dodwell (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927), p. 106.

14. His 1797 memoir is *Tafzih ul ghāfilīn* [*The Disgrace of the Negligent*—he was virulently opposed to the *nawāb* and his court], ed. 'Ābid Rezā Bīdar (Rampur: Institute of Historical Studies, 1965). Trans. W. Hoey as *History of Asafū ddaulah* (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces and Oudh Government Press, 1885; rpt., Lucknow: Pustak Kendra, 1971). References

are to the Hoey translation. Abū Tālib is more notorious for his subsidized trip to Europe and London, about which he wrote in *Ma'sir-i Tālibī*, trans. Charles Stewart as *Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan* (London: 1810; rpt. New Delhi: Sona, 1972). For the revolt of Chait Singh generally, see K.K. Datta, *Anti-British Plots and Movements Before 1857* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1970), chapter 1.

15. Hannay's subordinate officers are named on p. 44 of Abū Tālib's memoir; they were all British, and virtually all of them were killed in the ensuing revolt.

16. Warren Hastings, *A Narrative of the Late Transactions at Benares* (London: J. Debrett, 1782), reprinted in *India Tracts, 1772-1872* (Calcutta: Bangabasi Office, 1905), 106 pp. and 45 pp. of appendices.

17. Abū Tālib, pp. 43-44.

18. H.T. Colebrooke to his father, 28 July 1788, in T.E. Colebrooke, *The Life of H.T. Colebrooke* (1873), p. 30, quoted in Marshall, p. 119.

19. London, 1818, vol. 4, pp. 313-15.

20. Quoted in H.C. Irwin, *The Garden of India* (London: W.H. Allen, 1880), p. 90.

21. Middleton to Calcutta Council, FDSC 2, 9 October 1781.

22. Abū Tālib, 45-46.

23. Italics in original. Hannay to Middleton, 8, 13, and 20 September 1781, quoted extensively in Middleton to Hastings, 17 October 1781, appended to Hastings, *Narrative of the Transactions in Benares*, pp. 95-101.

24. See Major John Macpherson's journal in *Soldiering in India 1764-1787*, ed. William Charles Macpherson (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1928), pp. 401-02.

25. *Bakhsh*, p. 107.

27. Abū Tālib, p. 46.

27. Abū Tālib, p. 46.

28. *Bakhsh*, p. 207.

29. *Bakhsh*, p. 198.

30. Middleton to Hastings, 5 Feb. 1782, FDSC, 40A, 12 June 1783.

31. See my "Political Problems of the Early Lucknow Residency," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Hyderabad Session (1978), fall 1979, pp. 187-203, for a full account of this crisis, which forced Hastings to redefine the British relationship with Awadh during a visit to the *nawāb* in 1784, his last official act before going home.

32. *Bakhsh*, p. 255.

33. Shore's official account appears as "Narrative of the Revolution in Oudh," 14 Jan. 1798, FDSC 30 Jan. 1798, pp. 53-126. Reproduced in *The Private Record of an Indian Governor-Generalship, 1793-98*, ed. Holden Furber (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), appendix c, pp. 159-82.

34. For Wellesley's harsh terms and imperious schoolmaster's language, see Wellesley Papers, British Library, Add. 13526-27.

35. *Bakhsh*, pp. 249–51.

36. *Bakhsh*, pp. 261–64, 290–304.

37. A.F.M. Abdul Ali, "The Last Will and Testament of Bahu Begam," *Indian Historical Records Commission, Proceedings* 6 (Jan. 1924): 149–56.

38. Richard Strachey's correspondence as Resident of Lucknow, 3 Nov. 1815–24 Jan. 1816, India Office Library and Records, mss Eur. D5143.

39. Two recent studies of this extensive patronage are Pheroza Godrej and Pauline Rohatgi, *Scenic Splendours: India Through the Printed Image* (London: The British Library, Arnold Publishers, 1989), and Mildred Archer and T.P. Bruhn, *A Journey to Hindoostan: Graphic Art of British India, 1780–1860* (Storrs, Conn.: William Benton Museum of Art, 1987).

40. For this genre, see Carla R. Petievich, "Poetry of the Declining Mughals: The Shahr Ashob," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 25.1 (1990): 99–110; Kumkum Chatterjee, *Merchants, Politics, and Society in Early Modern India: Bihar, 1733–1820* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), chapter 9; Fritz Lehmann, "The Eighteenth-Century Transition in India: Responses of Some Bihar Intellectuals," Ph.D. dissertation in history, University of Wisconsin, 1967; Fritz Lehmann, "Shah Ayat Allah 'Jauhri' and his Shahr Ashob," *Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visarad Commemoration Volume* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1971), pp. 73–82.

SITT NAŞRA BINT 'ADLĀN:  
A SUDANESE NOBLEWOMAN  
IN HISTORY AND TRADITION

*Idris Salim al-Hasan and Neil McHugh*

*The Sudanese noblewoman Sitt Naşra bint 'AdlĀn (fl. c. 1800–c. 1860) has not received scholarly attention commensurate with her social, economic, and political prominence.*

Dr. Reitz took me one day to visit the celebrated Sitteh (Lady) Nasra, the daughter of the last king of Sennaar and brother of the present shekh of that province. She is a woman of almost masculine talent and energy, and may be said to govern Sennaar at present [1852]. All the Arab shekhs, as well as the population at large, have the greatest respect for her, and invariably seek her advice, in any crisis of affairs. Her brother, Idrīs wed AdlĀn, notwithstanding his nominal subjection to Egypt, still possesses absolute sway over several hundred villages, and is called king of Kulle [Ghule]. The Lady Nasra retains the title of Sultana, on account of her descent from the ancient royal house of Sennaar. She has a palace at Soriba, on the Blue Nile, which, according to Lepsius, exhibits a degree of wealth and state very rare in Sudan. She was then in Khartoum on a visit, with her husband, Mohammed Defalleh, the son of a former Vizier of her father, King Adlan.'

With these words the United States tourist Bayard Taylor introduces the Sudanese noblewoman whom he met during a sojourn in Khartoum in 1852. Despite hyperbole and some factual errors, this passage describes one of the most prominent and influential figures of nineteenth-century Nilotic Sudan—and one of the most ignored on the part of professional historians. Sitt Naşra bint 'AdlĀn was perhaps the highest-ranking survivor of the aristocracy of the Funj kingdom after its conquest by Egypt (1820–21), was a major actor in the political economy of the Turko-Egyptian



colonial system or Turkiyya, and was singled out for significant notice by a number of contemporary European travellers and residents. She is moreover a personage still very much alive in the social memory of the Gezira region (between the White and Blue Niles).

The purpose of this article is threefold: to provide a historical sketch of Sitt Naşra bint ‘Adlān, that is, a biography set in the context of the nineteenth-century history of the Nilotic Sudan (in the present-day Republic of the Sudan); to analyze and interpret the depiction of her in subsequent and current oral traditions; and to suggest possible reasons for her invisibility in the historiography of the Sudan.

Sitt Naşra was born about the beginning of the nineteenth century at or near Sinnār, the capital of the Funj kingdom. Her grandfather, Muḥammad Abū Likaylik, a Hamaj nobleman and military commander originating in the province of Gubba on the Ethiopian frontier, had seized effective power over the state a generation earlier (1762).<sup>2</sup> He had preserved the institution of kingship as a titular authority while retaining for himself the position of first minister [*wazīr*], which amounted, in effect, to regency. His successors in the Hamaj Regency, which lasted until the fall of the kingdom in 1821, were his nephew, then, consecutively, four of his sons, a grandson, and finally another of his sons. Naşra’s father, ‘Adlān, served as the capable chief military commander of the fifth regent (Idrīs, 1213–18/1798 or 1799–1803) and himself as the sixth, though only for some three months in the year 1218/1803 before his assassination at Sinnār.<sup>3</sup> Her older brother, Muḥammad wad ‘Adlān, was the most powerful figure in the shrunken and enfeebled kingdom from 1223/1808 until its demise thirteen years later though in formal rank he was only third, behind the *makk* [king], Bādī VI, and the *wazīr*, Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Abū Likaylik.<sup>4</sup> He was killed in 1821, the final victim of fratricidal feuding among the Awlād Abū Likaylik before the Turkish occupation of Sinnār.

If Sitt Naşra was born on her father’s side into the most powerful family in the Nilotic Sudan, her rank and station in society was also inherited from her mother who was a member of the Funj royal house. By Funj custom, royal status was transmitted through the mother’s line and even if there was what Jay Spaulding has called a “drift of preference” from matrilineal to patrilineal descent in the

course of the eighteenth century (under the growing influence of Arab Islamic norms),<sup>5</sup> it was by virtue of Sitt Naşra's birth to a Funj princess that she was accorded the title of *sulţāna*<sup>6</sup> and was mistress in her house even in the company of the great merchant and the eminent nobleman whom she successively married.

Sitt Naşra's first husband, Muḥammad Sandalōba, was a Sinnār merchant who engaged in caravan traffic with Egypt and whose brother Ḥasan was later described by Richard Lepsius (in 1844) as "the chief of the Arabian merchants" in the city.<sup>7</sup> This marriage probably took place shortly before the Egyptian conquest<sup>8</sup> and produced at least two children, a daughter, Ḍawwa, and a son, who died young. After the death of Muḥammad Sandalōba, Sitt Naşra married the Arbāb Muḥammad Daf'Allāh, son of the Arbāb Daf'Allāh wad Aḥmad [*arbāb* being a title of nobility] and of Sitt Naşra's paternal aunt 'Ajsa bint Muḥammad Abū Likaylik—hence they were first cousins.<sup>9</sup> Arbāb Daf'Allāh had been one of the most successful, and certainly the most durable, of the politicians of the Hamaj Regency—one "whose canny and consistent opportunism made him a reliable political bellwether"<sup>10</sup> from the time of his rise in the 1790s until his tactful submission to Ismā'īl Pasha of Egypt before the latter's entry into Sinnār (June 1821). Daf'Allāh's son Muḥammad carried on the legacy by accommodating himself effectively to the colonial regime.

The imposition of colonial rule presented a critical juncture for the Funj-Hamaj elite of the *ancien régime*, in the sense of new dangers and new opportunities. The pre-colonial order had rested on status distinctions between nobility, religious leaders, commoners, and slaves and the concomitant distribution of political and economic prerogatives, though the economic and political underpinnings of the system had long been crumbling under the pressure of factionalism and civil war.<sup>11</sup> Nobility (including royalty) was distinguished by the administration and taxation of the fief-like districts and provinces into which the Funj territories were divided [called in Arabic *dār*]; personal disposal of private estates [also called *dār*] granted by the *makk* or his delegates; and certain rights associated with a prestigious lifestyle, such as freedom of movement, exemption from sumptuary laws, and the privilege to demand hospitality of commoners.

Initially, the Turkish-Egyptian intervention wreaked havoc with the old order due to a rebellion touched off by the assassination of Ismā'il Pasha at Shandī (1822), the subsequent bloody reprisals of the Turkish troops, and a massive emigration from the Nile valley to the mountainous districts along the Ethiopian frontier.<sup>12</sup> Khūrshīd Agha, later Pasha, inaugurated a more stable period during his lengthy tenure as governor-general (1826–38) by placating the nobility and holymen through recognition of their personal landholdings, concession of administrative powers in their home districts, and their appointment as advisors or bureaucrats within the colonial government. A substantial expansion of commerce—both public and private—in slaves, ivory, and other commodities provided another source of revenue for indigenous leadership willing and able to take advantage of it.

Sitt Naşra and her immediate kin constituted the most notable and successful survivors of the Funj-Hamaj nobility under the harsh and exploitative Turkiyya dispensation. In 1242/1826–27, her brother Idrīs wad 'Adlān submitted to Khūrshīd through the instrumentality of her daughter's husband (or husband-to-be), 'Abd al-Qādir wad al-Zayn, and was handsomely rewarded. Idrīs was granted jurisdiction over a vast expanse of the southern Gezira or 'Funj mountains' with the title of the *makk* of Ghule [Arabic, Qulī]. 'Abd al-Qādir himself was designated *shaykh al-mashāyikh* of the (northern) Gezira and was one of the governor-general's most intimate advisors.<sup>13</sup> Sitt Naşra's husband, Muḥammad Daf' Allāh, was *shaykh* of Wad Madanī district as of the 1840s.<sup>14</sup> All three of her kinsmen—her brother, husband, and son-in-law—were active participants in government expeditions and slave raids to the south in the Berta and Dinka territories of the Blue Nile and White Nile, and to the east in al-Tāka (Kasalā).<sup>15</sup> Idrīs's capital in the Ghule massif of the southern Gezira, Ḥillat Idrīs, developed into a major center of the slave and gold trades and one of the largest settlements in the Nilotic Sudan.

Sitt Naşra established herself at Maranjān, on the west bank of the Blue Nile just upstream from Wad Madanī, one of the Sudan's fastest growing towns during the Turkiyya and briefly (in the 1820s) the colonial capital. Maranjān, with its water-wheels, was evidently her share of the great estates of the descendants of Muḥammad Abū Likaylik that centered around 'Abbūd (but it may also be noted that members of the Funj royal family seem also to have held lands

in the 'Abbūd area).<sup>16</sup> Her *dār* consisted both of irrigated land along the river and land away from the river [locally called *ḍahara*, high ground, hinterland] requiring rain-fed cultivation. It is possible that she found the densely wooded stretch of shoreline inadequate for her large retinue of relatives and slaves, and that this is why she created the village of Sūrība, several kilometers back from the river, as her main residence and court while retaining a second home in Maranjān.<sup>17</sup>

Several European visitors to Sūrība in the 1820s and 1840s were struck by the impressive size and unusual configuration of her residence. Lepsius made one of two surviving descriptions of it:

When we arrived in Soriba, we stepped through a peculiar gate-house into the great square court-yard, which passes round the principal building, and then into an open lofty hall, the roof of which rested on four pillars, and four pilasters. The narrow beams of the ceiling jut out several feet above the simple architrave, and form the immediate support of the flat roof; the whole entrance reminded me much of the open facades of the tombs of Benihassan [Egypt].<sup>18</sup>

Several features of the Sūrība complex are congruent with what is known of the palaces of Funj times: a large open square in front for public events and markets, an outer enclosure wall and latticed or grilled windows for the security and seclusion of the women of the court, a great hall for granting audiences, numerous divans, and private apartments for the many court retainers and officers.<sup>19</sup>

Sūrība was situated on the main north-south road linking Khartoum, Wad Madanī, Sinnār, and the Ethiopian border. This may well have been a major factor in Sitt Naṣra's decision to move from Maranjān to Sūrība, because the latter served not only as an agricultural settlement and a small market center but also as a place of entertainment for travellers and for the Wad Madanī community of officials and soldiers (of the 8th Regiment) an hour and half to the north.<sup>20</sup> Sitt Naṣra possessed a large complement of slaves who comprised most of the inhabitants of the village (the minority of Ja'aliyyin was perhaps engaged in commerce);<sup>21</sup> this was true on a smaller scale of the generality of notables and merchants. In the case of Sūrība, the slaves were largely young women who served the needs of out-of-town guests: "there is plenty of *umm bilbil* and *marīsa* [types of millet beer]; pigeons are cheap."<sup>22</sup> There was also prostitution, an institution well-established and widespread

throughout the region and, as elsewhere, particularly profitable in market-towns and along well-frequented routes. This is well attested by a number of nineteenth-century travellers, censorious and otherwise.<sup>23</sup> Sitt Naşra had her own corps of retainers in the palace for her personal service and the entertainment of distinguished visitors.

Both the internal and external trade in slaves, and the use of slaves for agricultural and domestic labor, appear to have increased substantially during the Turkiyya, though quantitative measures are lacking.<sup>24</sup> The launching of government expeditions to acquire slave recruits for the new Egyptian army [the Jihādiyya] of Muḥammad 'Alī created a surge in supply. Sitt Naşra's supply came most likely through Idrīs 'Adlān, Muḥammad Daf'Allāh, and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Zayn, who were directly involved in raiding, yet the important slave market at al-Masallamiyya was also nearby. Sitt Naşra's household was replete with other trade goods and imported commodities: "beautiful furniture of Indian work in ebony", vessels of gold and silver, European chairs, gold jewellery, and beads.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover Sitt Naşra developed direct personal relationships with the Turkish rulers, including the Governor-General Aḥmad Paşhā Abū Aḏān and officials at Wad Madanī.<sup>26</sup> Her independence, superior rank and commanding presence vis-a-vis her husband and son-in-law were noticed by Lepsius, Taylor, and an anonymous French diarist.<sup>27</sup> On at least one occasion, she travelled to Khartoum,<sup>28</sup> and when a royal pretender of the Taqali kingdom, west of the White Nile in Kordofan, came to the Gezira to solidify his claim to the throne, he sought the legitimizing support of Sitt Naşra.<sup>29</sup>

When she granted audience, Sitt Naşra sat apart from her retinue and visitors and spoke through a dragoman.<sup>30</sup> Visitors prostrated themselves when they entered her presence.<sup>31</sup> Her mode of dress also reflected her status: "She was wrapped in long, finely-woven linen, with colored borders, and underneath she wore wide, party-coloured trousers of a darker hue."<sup>32</sup> She ate in private and, judged by Lepsius's experience, did not readily appear in person before visitors though she was generous in bestowing gifts.<sup>33</sup> Finally, she was the object of praise songs; Lepsius met in Wad Madani a *rabābī* [player of the *rabāba*, a stringed instrument] who sang lyrics in honor of Sitt Naşra, along with her brother Idrīs, Makk Bādī, and others, in the presence of members of the Turkish ruling class.<sup>34</sup>

Her affiliation in spiritual matters seems to have been with the 'Arakiyyin family of holymen at Abū Ḥarāz, the most influential such family in the Wad Madanī area. The prominent *Shaykh* Aḥmad al-Rayyaḥ al-'Arakī came to bless the well when Sūrība was founded, and Sitt Naşra herself was eventually buried at Abū Ḥarāz.<sup>35</sup> She is said to have died at about age sixty,<sup>36</sup> which would mean that she did not live many years after meeting Bayard in Khartoum.

Old Nubia—encompassing the lands bordering the Nile between Egypt and Ethiopia—had a strong tradition of women's influence on social and political affairs. Many queens were either direct rulers or the real power behind the throne as queen-mothers or sisters of the king.<sup>37</sup> Many important events in Sudanese history and many place-names as well are closely linked to female characters. For example, the fall of Sōba and the rise of Sinnār are associated in social memory with an old woman and a woman slave, respectively. This tradition of female power-magnates continued in one form or another at least up to the end of British colonial rule (1898–1955). For instance, the famous Malika [queen] Amna virtually controlled the southeastern borders during the second decade of this century. Another example is Sitt Maryam (d. 1952) of Sinkāt (in eastern Sudan) whose tomb is the principal pilgrimage center for the followers of the *Khatmiyya tariqa* [religious order].<sup>38</sup> Here, two points are in order. First, with a slight qualification, the above discussion is generally in agreement with Lepsius's observation that "[a] great preference for the female sex seems to have been a very universal custom since ancient times in these southern countries"<sup>39</sup> which he makes in the context of his account of the visit to Suriba and with reference to the rule of queens [Candace] and to matrilineal inheritance and succession in ancient and medieval Nubia. Secondly, the life of Sitt Naşra has to be viewed, we suggest, within the broad geographical and socio-historical context described above.

Sitt Naşra lived at a time of social and political upheaval and transformation preceding and following the colonial conquest of 1820–21. The expansion of private trade, in combination with the collapse of orderly administration during the last several decades of the Funj state, induced noblemen to compete with the merchant class and compensate for dwindling revenues through commercial

ventures, including the employment of slaves as beer-vendors and prostitutes.<sup>40</sup> Burckhardt mentions that in Berber and Shandī (in 1814) many households had a room set aside for “public women” for the entertainment of visitors; this was the arrangement at the residence of his host in Berber, a nobleman of the town’s ruling family.<sup>41</sup> There may be somewhat of a parallel in contemporary Ethiopia where the impoverishment of the landed nobility, amid civil strife and the spread of lawlessness, forced them to seek supplementary or alternative means of livelihood—including commerce, masonry, weaving, beer-making, and prostitution.<sup>42</sup> In this light, Sitt Naşra’s domestic establishment at Sūrība reflects both a changing lifestyle and economic necessity among the aristocracy. These conditions overlap the late Funj and colonial periods.

The onset of the Turkiyya brought about massive changes, politically in the rules and institutions of governance, socially in ways of eating, dressing, and other modes of behavior, and economically in the systems and types of agricultural production. Sitt Naşra was a part and a product of these and the preceding changes and, due to her salient character, could symbolize and personify them in social memory.

Three sources serve as repositories of social recollections of her image. The first source is a presumed narrative of some of Sitt Naşra’s collected anecdotes written in mixed classical/colloquial Arabic, with the speech of Sitt Naşra and other Hamaj figures rendered in dialect. Neither the authorship nor the authenticity of the work, which is thought by some scholars to have been written during the Turkiyya, can be verified.<sup>43</sup> The second source is what her descendants at Sūrība still remember of her.<sup>44</sup> The third consists of stories and characterizations of her still widely circulating among people in the Gezira area.<sup>45</sup> Depictions of Sitt Naşra’s character in the three sources and the travellers’ accounts both coincide and diverge.

The three sources agree that she was extremely wealthy, politically powerful, and domineering. They also agree on characterizing her physically as tall, very beautiful, dark brown, with long black hair and a very audible voice. Some of these characterizations seem to accord with her well-established ancestry, successful marriages, and kinship alliances and strong relations with the new Turkish rulers. Nonetheless, these sources tend to emphasize, to a degree of exaggeration, her unique personal qualities. The descendants of Sitt

Naşra, in accordance with ongoing social and cultural processes, de-emphasize her Hamaj identity and stress her Ja'alī roots, which they trace back to al-Jiwayr, north of Shandī.

The generalized social memory in the Gezira underlines her commanding and absolute power, almost to the level of cruelty, over her "subjects". One day, a story goes, she was enticed to observe how a crocodile kills and consumes its prey. She and her retinue chose a site rumored to be harboring a voracious crocodile, and she ordered one of her male slaves to be thrown to the beast. After a long period of waiting in the sun, the crocodile still did not appear. Another man in her retinue, eager to appease her, instructed the poor slave to make enough noise to lure the animal. She is reported to have ordered the second man to take the slave's place since he presumed to know better what could attract the crocodile. Other stories describe in exaggerated fashion the way her palace was built using meat soup instead of water to mix mud; and employing a line of slaves six kilometers long passing bricks from hand to hand from the Nile to Sūriba.

*Sīra Sitt Naşra* [Sitt Naşra's biography],<sup>46</sup> however, offers a different image of her: daring in making moral transgressions; of immodest behavior and dress; lax and permissive in observing social norms; enjoying unrestrained social freedom (men freely mixing with men); and religious negligence and ignorance. One anecdote tells how she reprimanded a religious preacher who, her maids complained, had annoyed them by his shouting. Sitt Naşra summoned him and enquired what he was doing. He replied that he was reminding people of their religious obligations, and urging them to abide by what God and His Prophet (Muḥammad) had ordered. She retorted by asking him how recently he had returned from God's presence; and whether the Prophet had declared His inability to shoulder His message Himself and had asked the preacher for help.

The language of the *Sīra* contains many obscene words and uses direct sexual allusions to private parts of the body, appearing as an actual rendition of her speech. She is reported in another anecdote to have been extremely pleased with the description of her private parts by a passing 'arabī [Arab nomad] when they were accidentally uncovered by the wind. Not content with this, she took him to her



husband to repeat the same description to him, and finally urged her husband to reward the 'arabī handsomely for his praise.

We are presented here in this article with at least three seemingly contradictory pictures based on historical accounts of the European travellers; what has remained in social memory; and the written 'oral' anecdotes incorporated in the *sīra*. The travellers' accounts are passing remarks of short encounters with Sitt Naşra. They appear to be specifically fascinated by her majestic character and 'presence', reminiscent of great Nubian and Ethiopian empresses and queens, especially when set against the background of an 'uncivilized' and 'backward' population (of women in particular). They must have been struck by the influence she had had over all her subjects and other men, including men of nobility and authority—such as her brother, husband, and son-in-law. All the power of these men was eclipsed in her presence; they kneeled before her like subjects, and silently waited for her initiative and commanding instructions. The travellers' accounts reveal their admiration for the order, discipline, respect, and dignity prevalent at her court.

The 'folk' image of her in social memory is that of an outstanding 'autocratic' figure, not bending to any male authority. It sees her (despite a lack of formal education) as a woman of action capable of constructing a new residence (Sūrība) and administering it on her own. Though her image does not completely conform to the ideal model of 'woman' in society, her astonishing deeds and achievements nevertheless captured people's attention and imagination.

The *Sīra*, on the other hand, portrays Sitt Naşra as socially outrageous and morally loose. Here, unlike in the social memory, she is not only socially deviant, but is in fact an exemplification of social disgrace. Not controlled by men, she knows no limits on satisfying her carnal desires. In this view, she is ignorant, clumsy, and tactless, but also canny. Sūrība under her is depicted as a place full of prostitution and of enjoyments for pleasure-seekers; and Sitt Naşra herself is in the midst of this wild life, holding nightly drinking-parties.<sup>47</sup> In other words, she serves as a very good model for what a woman's social behavior might be when not constrained by men.

One would think that this rich, colorful and controversial personality should have attracted the attention of modern historians of the Sudan. It is very surprising that not a single work has been

published about her to our knowledge, something which in itself requires explanation. Tentative and conjectural explanations only can be suggested here. As a historical figure Sitt Naşra lives on not only in the general social memory but also through the numerous descendants of her extended family who live in Hilāliyya, Wādī Sha‘īr, al-Ḥōsh, al-Ruşayriş, and Sūrība itself. Some of them currently occupy prominent social and professional positions; one of them is a retired lieutenant-general. In the Sudan, social and personal links always place a taboo on sensitive subjects, especially those associated with women. But Sitt Naşra cannot be easily dismissed as a ‘marginal’ personality because of her well-established ancestry and social relations. As such, she is now—when women are being relegated to domination by men in the Sudan—a disquieting figure. Once she enters the historical record it becomes difficult to handle her case. Hence, it may seem advantageous to some to let her memory fade away with the passage of time.

#### NOTES

1. Bayard Taylor, *A Journey to Central Africa* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970 [reprint of 1854 edition]). For the Arabic title *sitt* as used for “queen,” see Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (Cambridge, Eng.: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 19–20. The ‘wed’ [wad] in “Idris wed Adlan” means ‘son’ and is equivalent to ‘ibn’ (b.).

2. For a detailed account of Muḥammad Abū Likaylik and the Hamaj Regency, see Jay Spaulding, *The Heroic Age in Sinnār* (East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1985), pp. 299–451.

3. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Abū ‘Alī, *Makḥṭūṭa Kātib al-Shūna* [Funj Chronicle; hereafter, *Makḥṭūṭa*] (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thāqafa wa’l-Irshād al-Qawmī, n.d. [1961], 48–49; Spaulding, *Heroic Age*, pp. 425, 440–41.

4. Spaulding, *Heroic Age*, pp. 442–43.

5. Spaulding, *Heroic Age*, p. 218.

6. Richard Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia. and the Peninsula of Sinai* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), p. 177.

7. Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 173; Interview with Hajū Muḥammad Aḥmad (a direct descendant of Muḥammad Sandalōba), Sinnār Junction, February 1995.

8. This relative dating is based on the fact that the daughter of this marriage had married and divorced by 1844: Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 177.

9. Interview with Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Adlān, Sūrība, June 1995.

10. Spaulding, *Heroic Age*, p. 426.

11. Spaulding, *Heroic Age*, pp. 139–296.

12. Richard Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan 1820–1881* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 13–18.
13. *Makhrūṭa*, pp. 106–107.
14. Richard Hill, *On the Frontiers of Islam: Two Manuscripts Concerning the Sudan Under Turco-Egyptian Rule 1822–1845* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 179.
15. Hill, *On the Frontiers*, pp. 15, 77, 33–34, 41–42; Lepsius, *Letters*, 177; Ferdinand Werne, *Reise durch Sennaar* (Berlin: Franz Dunder, 1852), p. 22.
16. Neil McHugh, *Holymen of the Blue Nile* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 125; Jay Spaulding and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Abū Salīm, eds., *Public Documents from Sinnār* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1989), p. 172 for reference to “the estate of the king’s mother” a short distance north of ‘Abbūd.
17. Hill, *On the Frontiers*, pp. 116, 120.
18. Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 178.
19. Hill, *On the Frontiers*, 116; *Makhrūṭa*, pp. 10–11.
20. Hill, *On the Frontiers*, p. 118.
21. Hill, *On the Frontiers*, p. 185.
22. Hill, *On the Frontiers*. For the market at Sūrība and the *dilka* massage administered to out-of-town visitors, see Werne, *Reise*, p. 23.
23. John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia* (London: John Murray, 1822), pp. 197–99, 249; Josef Ritter von Russegger, cited in R.S. O’Fahey and J.L. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London, 1974), p. 80; and Hill, *On the Frontiers*, pp. 116, 132, 140, 183.
24. Spaulding, “Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan, 1820–1881,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15. 1 (1982): 10; McHugh, *Holymen*, p. 156.
25. Lepsius, *Letters*, 1789; Taylor, *Journey*, pp. 294–95.
26. Hill, *On the Frontiers*, pp. 117–18; Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 176.
27. Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 177; Taylor, *Journey*, pp. 294–95; Hill, *On the Frontiers*, p. 185.
28. Taylor, *Journey*, p. 294.
29. This claimant to the throne of Taqalī, Nāṣir wad Abakr, was ultimately successful in his bid, with the backing of the colonial government. Janet Joran Ewald, *Soldiers, Traders, and Slaves: State Formation and Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley 1700–1885* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), p. 106.
30. Taylor, *Journey*, p. 294; Lepsius, *Letters* p. 179.
31. Hill, *On the Frontiers*, p. 185.
32. Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 179.
33. Taylor, *Journey*, pp. 295–96; Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 180.
34. Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 182.

35. Interview with Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Alī ‘Adlān at Sūrība, September, 1995. Sitt Naṣra’s association with Shaykh Aḥmad al-Rayyah would seem ironic given his reputed role in the assassination of her brother Muḥammad ‘Adlān in 1821: *Makhrūṭa*, p. 79.
36. Same interview as preceding note.
37. ‘Umar Ḥājj al-Zākī, “Dawr wa makānat al malikāt fi Marawi,” unpublished paper (in Arabic) presented at Fourth International Conference of the Institute of African and Asian Studies, “The Nile Basin: Continuity and Change,” University of Khartoum, 1982.
38. See, for instance, Idris Salim al-Hasan. “Mulāḥazāt ḥawl ba’d ‘al-muṣḥkilāt al-baḥthiyya ‘an waḍ al-mar’a fī sharq al-Sūdān”, *Bulletin of Sudanese Studies* (University of Khartoum) 11.1–2 (1992): 94–97.
39. Lepsius, *Letters*, p. 179.
40. O’Fahey and Spaulding, *Kingdoms*, p. 82.
41. Burchkhardt, *Travels*, pp. 197, 249.
42. Merid Wolde Aregay, “Gondar and Adwa: A Tale of Two Cities,” *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 63–64.
43. A copy of this manuscript is kept with Dr. Ja‘far Mīrghanī, who has been kind enough to discuss it with us during an interview with him in February, 1995 at his office, University of Khartoum.
44. Interviews at Sūrība with a number of her descendants and relatives; specifically, offspring of her brother Muḥammad ‘Adlān, June 1995.
45. These stories are especially current in the Wad Madanī, al-Ḥōsh, and Sinnār areas.
46. Though the work is not wholly about Sitt Naṣra, the sections in which she is mentioned are referred to as *Sīra* [biography] as they describe different episodes of her life. The following anecdotes carry the numbers 6 and 4 in the manuscript, consecutively.
47. Anecdote number 5 in the manuscript. Only one of our five contemporary European accounts depicts Sitt Naṣra (and her daughter Ḍawwa) as morally reproachable and emphasizes the existence of prostitution at Sūrība, in the context of a discussion of the widespread occurrence of brothels in Sudanese towns and villages: Hill, *On the Frontiers*, pp. 115–21.



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